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# SHORT NOTES ON ALASKAN GEOLOGY 1991

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## FOREWORD

The Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys is pleased to reintroduce the series "Short Notes on Alaskan Geology." In producing this edition, we are indebted to Dr. Robert B. Forbes, former State Geologist, for providing much of the enthusiasm and impetus for continuing the "Short Notes" series. This unique source of brief but informative papers on a wide variety of topics related to geology in Alaska represents the works of earth scientists in state and federal agencies, universities, and industry. Because of their brevity and limited scope, many of the papers in this series might not be accepted for publication in journals with more national and international focus. Nonetheless, the subject matter is very useful to those interested in learning more about the geology of Alaska.

The new Short Notes series mirrors changes in DGGS that have resulted from increased technical capabilities but smaller budgets and a reduced staff. This 1991 issue, the sixth and largest in the series, represents a transition from labor-intensive production techniques of the past to more efficient computer graphics and desktop-publishing methods. A smaller staff has meant that more people became involved in planning, coordination, editing, formatting, and preparation than before. More responsibility for manuscript preparation was given to authors, who produced initial drafts, made changes suggested by reviewers and the editor, and ultimately provided final draft manuscripts on PC diskettes. Author-generated, camera-ready figures hastened publication considerably. Much innovative thinking and hard work by many talented folks have greatly improved the appearance and readability of Short Notes and will heighten reader interest. For the first time, computer-generated colored figures are part of the format. We anticipate that the instructions for contributing authors that are printed inside the front and back covers will encourage future contributions from inside and outside of DGGS.

All of these changes are intended to improve service to authors and to our readership. We hope that the response will be greater interest among the entire earth-science community and increased participation in this unique series.

Thomas E. Smith  
State Geologist

Front cover: *Light-colored ash of the 1912 eruption of Mt. Katmai overlying oxidized Lethe tephra along lower Windy Creek, Katmai National Park. Photograph by DeAnne S. Pinney.*

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# TIN PLACERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DOWNCUTTING OF FISSURE BASALTS, RAY RIVER DRAINAGE, ALASKA

By  
James C. Barker<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Alluvial cassiterite is widespread in river gravels and high-level terraces in the Ray River drainage, an area of low, unglaciated hills immediately north of the Yukon River (fig. 1). Anomalous tin was first detected in stream-sediment samples about 65 km northwest of the Fort Hamlin Hills by Herreid (1969). Further investigations of tin mineralization initiated in 1975 by Barker and Foley (1986) identified significant placers and lodes in the vicinity of the Sithylemenkat pluton (fig. 1) and indicated that other plutons in the area were favorable sites. In 1983, a heavy-mineral survey of the pipeline corridor north of Livengood identified several areas of anomalous tin, including a cluster of sites near the inferred northern extent of the Fort Hamlin Hills pluton (Barker, 1983).

Beginning in 1985, the northern Fort Hamlin Hills and the Ray River watershed were studied as part of the U.S. Bureau of Mines Strategic Minerals Program. In this area, as much as 30 m of alluvium containing cassiterite was deposited over fissure-flood basalts that are up to 75 m thick in graben-like depressions. Subsequent erosion of cassiterite-bearing sediments also produced placers in modern fluvial terraces.

## METHODOLOGY

Heavy-mineral samples were collected from 63 sites. In addition, seven auger holes were drilled using a helicopter-portable, 6.4-cm-diam, solid-stem auger drill. Sampling and other errors in this technique are unevaluated, so reported tin grades should be considered as minimum values.

Tin content of heavy-mineral samples was determined by the X-ray fluorescence method. Values exceeding the 20,000-ppm upper detection limit were reassayed after total multi-acid digestion. Following analysis, the tin grade of each sample site was calculated in metric units.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For conversion, 1 lb of tin per/yd<sup>3</sup> equals 593 g/m<sup>3</sup>.

## BEDROCK GEOLOGY

The project area includes the Ray River and Fort Hamlin Hills plutons and parts of the Coal Creek and Sithylemenkat plutons (fig. 1). These plutons intrude metasedimentary rocks of Paleozoic age that form part of the Ruby terrane, a broad northeast-striking belt of crystalline rock in northcentral Alaska (Arth and others, 1989). To the south, mafic volcanic rocks, gabbro, and chert of the Tozitna terrane are juxtaposed against the Ruby terrane in the Ray River area along a poorly exposed, major thrust fault (fig. 1).

The oldest rocks in the area are quartz-mica schist, light-colored quartzite, and phyllite of Paleozoic age or older. White quartz and quartz-carbonate veins and quartz stockworks are abundant, particularly in the phyllite. Overlying the older rocks is a quartzite-limestone unit of Paleozoic age. These rocks all exhibit thermal alteration in the vicinity of granitic intrusions. Rocks of the broad-domed granitic plutons generally underlie all higher terrain. They are separated by generally flat flows of fissure basalt, Tertiary sedimentary rocks, and unconsolidated sediments of Quaternary age that are preserved in poorly defined graben-like basins. Geothermal springs and seeps are mapped on the margins of the basins (Barker, 1991).

All plutons in the map area are Cretaceous (Arth and others, 1989). These multi-phased bodies are composed mainly of coarse, equigranular-to-porphyritic, K-spar-biotite quartz monzonite and granite. Subordinate phases include aplite, fine-grained tourmaline-bearing quartz monzonite, fine-grained quartz porphyry, and tourmaline pegmatite. Major-oxide analyses indicate that the plutons are peraluminous, calc-alkaline granite (Barker, 1991). These plutons are considered to be among more than a dozen similar calc-alkaline plutons of the Cretaceous-age Ruby batholith (Arth and others, 1989). Neither the Ray River nor the Fort Hamlin Hills plutons are dated; however, compositional similarities with the Sithylemenkat pluton ( $106 \pm 3$  Ma), the Ray Mountains pluton (109-112 Ma) to the west, and the Hodzana pluton (112 Ma) to the north indicate similar ages (Arth and others, 1989).

Fine-grained intrusive phases exhibit locally intense tourmalization, silicification, and variable sericitization. Alteration features are most readily observed in outcrops

Figure 1. *Geology of the Ray River-Fort Hamlin Hills area, central Alaska.*

near the south fork of No Name Creek (fig.1), and similar rubble is present in the road cut 5.5 km south of No Name Creek. The widespread abundance of quartz and quartz-tourmaline pebbles in high-level terrace gravels proximal to the northern and eastern Fort Hamlin Hills may indicate that tourmaline alteration and silicification are much more extensive than is indicated by surface exposures.

Coal-bearing sedimentary rocks of Tertiary-age (Ts) are exposed in outcrops or rubble at several places along the Ray and Dall Rivers (fig.2). This unit is composed of carbonaceous volcaniclastic mudstone with volcanic-ash beds, arkosic sandstone and conglomerate, and lignitic coal. Coal-bearing strata overlie an upward-fining sequence of quartzose pebble conglomerate and sandstone. Pieces of coal float up to 0.5 m thick are present on gravel bars of the Ray River, indicating that Tertiary rocks underlie the valley floor. These Tertiary rocks are probably preserved in a north-striking graben between the Ray River and Fort Hamlin plutons. The Ts unit was primarily deposited during the early to middle Tertiary. A K-Ar date for a volcanic-ash bed overlying the coal implies an Eocene date of  $38.6 \pm 1.6$  Ma (Barker, 1981). The most complete section of Tertiary sediments is exposed in the Ray River bluff 3 km above the mouth of No Name Creek. There, a 15-m-thick sequence of coaly tuff, carbonaceous tuff with interstitial masses of vitranite, coal, arkosic sands, and semi-consolidated, white-weathering fluvial gravels, is overlain by 60 m of basalt flows.

Horizontal basalt lavas (Tb) form the youngest bedrock unit and are inferred to underlie about 156 km<sup>2</sup> of the Ray River drainage. Textures range from vesicular to massive, and compositions are generally olivine basalt, but minor andesite is also present. Vesicles are locally filled with calcite, quartz, or native sulfur. Most commonly, the basalts are fine-grained, but locally they have a medium-grained texture with lath-like plagioclase crystals randomly intergrown in a matrix of anhedral clinopyroxene. In an outcrop on Ray River 3 km upstream from No Name Creek at least three successive flows of fine-grained basalt feature columnar jointing between 500 and 725 ft (150 and 220 m) elevation.

Albanese (1987), who examined a basalt flow exposed in a roadcut 5 km south of No Name Creek, suggested a tholeiitic or alkaline affinity and compared the basaltic lavas to those formed in extensional systems. There are no exposed vents. Bases of the flows could only be examined at the Ray River outcrop, where they overlie coaly sedimentary rocks and exhibit a carbonaceous basal zone. A quenched-fracture stockwork, including thin (20 mm) selvages of obsidian and traces of phosphate staining, is exposed in the lowermost flow exposed at river level.

The basalt flows overlie Eocene sediments dated at  $38.6 \pm 1.6$  Ma, and a K-Ar date of  $30.59 \pm 0.92$  Ma indicates that the basalt flows are Oligocene (Albanese, 1987).

## LATE TERTIARY AND QUATERNARY DEPOSITS

The physiography of the Ray River area features rounded hills and wide, sediment-filled, semi-closed river basins. Valleys generally exhibit asymmetric cross sections with steeper north-facing slopes. Three mappable units of unconsolidated sediments document periods of sedimentation during the last 30 Ma: pre-basalt, white-weathering gravels (Twg); postbasalt high-level gravel terrace deposits (Qg); and Holocene floodplain and terrace alluvium (Qt), which is reworked from the high-level terraces.

Prior to extrusion of mid-Tertiary basalt flows, relief in the area apparently was similar to or less than modern relief. Unit Twg is the product of erosion of surrounding crystalline highlands. It is thin (<4 m thick) and locally discontinuous. Clasts include subrounded to rounded white-weathering quartz, silicified schist, and hypabyssal felsic rock. These lithologies indicate that the granitic complexes were initially unroofed during deposition of the Twg unit.

High-level terrace gravel (unit Qg) includes a dissected array of terrace remnants perched 100 m or more above modern floodplains. Thickest deposits are found southeast of the Ray River pluton. Deposition of nearly 250 km<sup>2</sup> of terrace gravel followed extrusion of basalt flows that blocked previous fluvial systems. The Qg gravel accumulated on the flows and other marginal upland surfaces. The unit is at least 15 to 30 m thick and is composed of fluvial sand and fine gravel (mostly quartz or granitic pebbles) crosscut by bouldery sandy gravel in paleochannels, which had patterns similar to present streams. The greater total volume of Qg material relative to the Twg unit indicates accelerated or prolonged erosion of highland crystalline bedrock subsequent to either local uplift or formation of nearby grabens. Later, the basalt flows and overlying terrace gravel were breached by stream incision. Consequently, most of the original terrace gravels are reworked and deposited (unit Qt) on the floodplains of modern streams and on low terraces.

## TIN PLACERS

Cassiterite is most highly concentrated where alluvium has been most intensively reworked. Principal placers are present in alluvium of modern floodplains



Figure 2. *Interpretive longitudinal valley profile A-A' along Ray River and No Name Creek, keyed to figure 1.*

and in low fluvial terraces (Qt). Tin is also widespread but less concentrated in high-level terraces (Qg) and is absent in the white-weathering gravels (Twg).

Placer tin is found in concentrations ranging from trace to about 25 g/m<sup>3</sup> throughout high-level terrace gravels (Qg) but is more concentrated in paleochannels. Gravel pits and roadcuts associated with construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline (TAPS) expose several paleochannels containing approximately 19 to 150 g/m<sup>3</sup> of tin. Later reworking of the Qg unit and concentration of heavy minerals in the alluvium beneath modern floodplains in terrace gravels (Qt) produced substantially higher tin values (18 to 3,706 g/m<sup>3</sup>) (Barker, 1991).

### **Placer Tin in High-Level Terrace Gravel**

Sampling and mapping were conducted to test the distribution of placer tin in alluvium of high-level terraces near a gravel pit perched on basalt flows about 45 m above No Name Creek (figs. 2 and 3). Unit Qg at this location consists of stratified, well-sorted sand, reworked grüß, and pebble gravel. Foreset bedding is common. At least two paleochannels of ancestral No Name Creek were identified in the pit. Poorly stratified paleochannel gravels are cobbly, consisting of clasts of granitic rock, quartz, and schist. Samples from these paleochannels contained between trace and 70 g/m<sup>3</sup> of tin; the higher value is from a single site in the southern channel where the gravel-bedrock contact is exposed (fig. 3). A streambed gravel exposure immediately upstream from the pipeline crossing contained 100 g/m<sup>3</sup> of tin, which may indicate further concentration of heavy minerals in modern alluvium (Qt).

Another gravel pit in weathered granite and high-level gravels 10.5 km south of the No Name Creek crossing exposes a cobbly, gravel-filled paleochannel cut into bedrock. The channel strikes east-southeast. A channel sample from the lowermost 1.2 m of the gravel contained the equivalent of 142 g/m<sup>3</sup> of tin.

A hilltop roadcut 4.8 km south of the No Name Creek bridge exposes another broad paleochannel feature on highly weathered basalt flows. This paleochannel is approximately 120 m wide and is filled with clay, basalt clasts, and pebble-cobble gravel predominantly composed of quartz-tourmaline and tourmaline granite. A single, 1.8-m long, vertical channel sample from the roadcut contained 113 g/m<sup>3</sup> of tin.

### **Placer Tin in Holocene Alluvium**

Gravel exposed in low cutbanks along lower No Name Creek and Ray River was sampled at water level during canoe traverses. Typically, the gravel is loose

Figure 3. *Geologic map of gravel pit south of No Name Creek showing heavy-mineral sample localities and projections of cassiterite-bearing paleochannels about 4-5 m above present streams. Location of map area shown in figure 1.*

and uncompacted and is composed of coarse sand with little to no fine fraction. Auger drilling indicates the silt-fine sand fraction increases substantially at depths of 2 to 3 m; however, mixed auger cuttings were unsuitable for sieve analysis. Gravel in terraces and channel fills shallower than 2 to 3 m is unstratified and frequently reworked during floods, thereby precluding heavy-mineral accumulations and implying that heavy minerals are underrepresented in the samples. Consequently, surface samples may represent minimal heavy-mineral values per unit volume of gravel relative to the grade of heavy minerals expected in fine-grained sediment below depths of 2 to 3 m. Subsurface data are limited to only five auger holes drilled to depths of 3.4 to 7 m (fig. 4). None of the holes reached bedrock. Tin content in the

auger cuttings, although diluted by surface gravel, averaged  $77 \text{ g/m}^3$  (Barker, 1991). Screening the cuttings to -16 mesh (1 mm) produced a tin grade of  $291 \text{ g/m}^3$ , a likely upper grade limit for the section sampled. Data from random locations indicate cutbank gravel along the Ray River contains 12 to  $463 \text{ g/m}^3$  of tin (fig. 4). There is no variation in tin content between sample sets from each of the three drainage basins along the Ray River; all surface samples contain tin values, and higher values are erratically dispersed. Lack of anomalous trends or clustering implies no single point source of cassiterite.

Samples from lower No Name Creek were less enriched with tin than samples from Ray River, possibly because of the greater distance to potential source rocks in the Fort Hamlin Hills or possibly due to dilution by sediment from unmineralized areas. Tin content of cutbank samples from lower No Name Creek ranged from 6 to  $36 \text{ g/m}^3$ .

The heavy-mineral suite in concentrate samples from alluvium of the modern floodplain and from low terraces (Qt) is dominated by ilmenite. Cassiterite is present as black, rounded, sand-size grains. Only a few crystalline and twinned cassiterite grains were found. Concentrates contain 1 to 5 percent monazite and xenotime. Monazite

is at least four times more abundant than xenotime, except on upper No Name Creek where this ratio is reversed. Tourmaline, wolframite, zircon, an iron-aluminum spinel, and uranothorite are present in minor to trace quantities. All heavy-mineral concentrates from Ray River and lower No Name Creek contain up to several dozen, minute gold particles. Gold is absent on upper No Name Creek. On lower No Name Creek, gold is spatially associated with the Twg unit.

Upper No Name Creek valley (fig. 5) has a thick loess (Ql) fill, and the creek is slow and meandering. A 9.2-m auger hole drilled in frozen, organic-rich loess did not penetrate gravel or bedrock. Two exposures of bench gravels, which are comparable to the unaccessible buried channels of No Name Creek, were located (fig. 5). One exposure 5 km east of the highway crossing is a series of channel remnants preserved on a low, resistant bedrock spine that juts perpendicular to and partially across the creek valley. At least three separate channels were sampled at increasing elevations between 9 and 15 m above the present creek. Tin content in these gravels averaged  $1,542 \text{ g/m}^3$  in six samples and ranged up to  $3,700 \text{ g/m}^3$  (Barker, 1991).

Additional unexposed channels up to 60 m above

Figure 4. Geologic map of Ray River and No Name Creek drainages showing heavy-mineral sample localities. Location of map area shown in figure 1.

the present valley floor are indicated in test pits by well-rounded, quartzose, pebble-cobble gravel. These paleochannel deposits contain cassiterite mixed with colluvium and loess. Samples of mixed gravel and colluvium contained trace to 771 g/m<sup>3</sup> of tin. Higher grade samples directly correlate with the abundance of alluvial gravel in the test pits. Gravel clasts are composed of quartz, tourmaline-bearing quartz, granite, chlorite greisen, and hornfels phyllite. Both upstream and downstream from this area, bench deposits have been destroyed by erosion and have been redeposited in modern alluvium.

Upper No Name Creek has apparently been eroding nearby cassiterite-bearing source rocks. At least 60 m of downcutting has occurred, and sample data indicate that successively younger channels became increasingly rich in cassiterite as gravel was repeatedly reworked.

Located about 0.8 km northeast of the first exposure, the second site is a gravel-bench remnant on a bedrock escarpment 4.6 m above a small tributary to No Name Creek. Test pits indicate a paleochannel width of 40 m, and samples contained tin concentrations up to 1,672 g/m<sup>3</sup> in well-rounded gravel of similar composition to the first site.

## DISCUSSION

Tin placers in the Ray River area developed as the result of lengthy and repeated cycles of erosion over large areas of favorable source rock. Modern floodplain and bench gravels are products of the erosion of several Cretaceous granitic plutons, probably in response to tectonic activity that produced graben-like features after mid-Tertiary time. The presence of alkaline fissure basalt, geothermal activity, and stepped elevations of the Tertiary-age coal beds are consistent with an interpreted formation of north- to northeast-striking grabens situated between granitic plutons. Tertiary basalt flows later blocked local drainages from granitic highlands. As a result, 15 to 30 m of gravelly alluvium were deposited in front of and over the flows. Subsequent downcutting of the flows and erosion coupled with fluvial and colluvial processes reworked most high-level gravels. The abundance of cassiterite and other heavy minerals correlates with the degree of fluvial reworking.

Data infer that a significant resource of tin and byproduct rare earth elements exists in the Ray River watershed (Barker, 1991), where estimated tin resources of between 28 and 78 million kg are projected. However, these estimates are subject to a wide margin of error. Most of the tin resources in the Ray River valley are at grades of 59 to 296 g/m<sup>3</sup>, which is probably not economic for a mineral deposit in Alaska at this time. However, elsewhere in the world tin dredges commonly work ground containing 178 to 237 g/m<sup>3</sup>. Although conditions are different from Alaska, Malaysian tin dredges have successfully operated in ground containing as little as 107 g/m<sup>3</sup> (Sager, written commun., 1990).

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Figure 5. Geologic map of upper No Name Creek showing heavy-mineral sample localities and projections of paleochannels. Location of map area shown in figure 1.

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# GEOLOGY AND GEOCHEMISTRY OF THE GAGARYAH BARITE DEPOSIT, WESTERN ALASKA RANGE, ALASKA

By

Thomas K. Bundtzen<sup>1</sup> and Wyatt G. Gilbert<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In 1989, while conducting 1:63,360-scale geologic mapping on State-interest lands near the headwaters of Gagaryah River in the Lime Hills D-4 Quadrangle of western Alaska (Gilbert and others, 1990), barite-bearing sedimentary rocks of presumed Frasnian (early Late Devonian) age were discovered by DGGs geologists. The discovery—herein named the Gagaryah barite deposit—consists of nodular, laminated, composite and massive, light-gray or white barite in a section up to 51 m thick in sublithic siltstone and shale in the Devonian to Jurassic Mystic terrane (Jones and others, 1982; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984; Reed and Nelson, 1980). This paper describes the geology and geochemistry of the barite mineralization, provides size and grade estimates, and compares the Gagaryah deposit with other stratiform barite deposits in Alaska and the North American Cordillera.

## REGIONAL GEOLOGY

Layered bedrock units in the study area (fig. 1) belong to the Dillinger and Mystic terranes of Cambrian through Jurassic (Jones and others, 1982; Bundtzen and Gilbert, 1983; Gilbert and Bundtzen, 1984). The Dillinger terrane in the study area consists of Cambro-Ordovician limestone turbidite (OCIs), Early Ordovician to late Early Silurian graptolitic shale, chert, and siltstone (SOsh), Middle to Late Silurian micaceous sandstone turbidite and minor graptolitic limestone (mSs), Late Silurian to Early Devonian massive-to-laminated limestone and calcareous sandstone (DSI), and Late Silurian to Early Devonian limestone conglomerate, and siltstone (DSIs). Fossil evidence for dating for these units was reported by Bundtzen and others (1988) and Gilbert and others (1989) from equivalent units in the McGrath Quadrangle.

The Mystic terrane in the study area consists of Devonian to upper Paleozoic carbonaceous shale and plant-bearing, sublithic sandstone (Ds); black-to-variegated chert (Dcs); and fossiliferous limestone (uPzs) that are exposed in a northeast-trending structural trough in the central part of the map area. Two fossil localities in the shale-silty sandstone unit (Ds) contain brachiopod-rich

faunas of probable Frasnian age. Late Paleozoic radiolaria and megafauna are reported from the overlying uPzs unit (Gilbert and others, 1990). Rock units believed to be equivalent to units Ds, Dcs, and uPzs unconformably overlie the Dillinger Terrane in the McGrath A-2 and B-2 Quadrangles 40 km northeast of the study area. Gilbert and Bundtzen (1984) and Bundtzen and Gilbert (1983) correlated these rocks with the Mystic terrane as mapped by Reed and Nelson (1980) in the Talkeetna Quadrangle.

Ultramafic to felsic dikes of early(?) Tertiary age intrude older layered rock units with no preferred structural orientation (fig. 1). Alluvial, colluvial, and glacial deposits (Qat, Qc, and Qd) overlie all older bedrock units, mainly as valley-fill accumulations.

The Cambrian to Early Devonian Dillinger terrane is thrust over the early Late Devonian to Permian(?) Mystic sequence along the Gagaryah thrust fault (fig. 1), probably a response to a middle Cretaceous compressional event described by Bundtzen and Gilbert (1983). Tertiary and younger high-angle faults, one of which forms a northeast-striking Holocene(?) escarpment, vertically offset bedrock units a few tens of meters throughout the study area in the Lime Hills D-4 Quadrangle.

## GEOLOGY OF GAGARYAH BARITE DEPOSIT

A geologic sketch map and a stratigraphic section of the Gagaryah deposit are shown in figures 2 and 3, respectively. Barite crops out sporadically at elevations ranging from 2,600 to 2,850 ft (793 to 869 m) over a minimum strike length of 640 m and is fairly well exposed in three northwest-striking gullies that cross northeast-striking Devonian strata. The best exposures form a nearly continuous 100-m-thick section in the discovery area immediately north of a Quaternary landslide (fig. 2). The deposit is buried at both ends beneath colluvium and was not found in an equivalent section across a stream valley approximately 1,500 m northeast of the mapped area (fig. 2).

The lower 30 m of the sedimentary section illustrated in figure 3 consists of alternating layers of dark-gray, limonite-stained cherty argillite (15 percent) and dark-gray-to-black, sooty, carbonaceous shale and brown siltstone (85 percent). Incompetent shales are conspicuously isoclinally folded with fold axes trending N. 40° W. and

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*Figure 1. Geology of upper East Fork, Gagaryah River area, southwestern Lime Hills D-4 Quadrangle, Alaska.*

*Figure 2. Gagaryah barite prospect, southwestern Lime Hills D-4 Quadrangle, Alaska.*



plunging 20° to 40°. Visible barite is present in 39 m of a 51-m-thick section exposed in the discovery gully (fig. 3); this is the maximum thickness observed for the Gagaryah deposit. Two other gully exposures farther southwest contain respectively, 7- and 6-m-thick zones of mainly massive barite, which indicates that the deposit thins markedly in that direction.

Barite at the Gagaryah deposit is present in a variety of morphological forms, several of which are summarized below. The main zone consists of alternating zones of nodular, laminated, composite and massive, light-gray-to-light-bluish-gray barite (figs. 3, 4 and 5). Some shale horizons contain minor disseminated pyrite, but otherwise the deposit is free of sulfides.

Nodular barite has several forms: (1) fine-grained aggregates, (2) fiber-bundle nodules, and (3) spherulites. Fine-grained aggregates are irregular to elliptical in shape and have crystalline structure similar to massive barite (fig. 4). Fiber-bundle needles and barite spherulites are typically associated with fine-grained aggregates and are composed of rosettes of euhedral, dipyrarnidal barite grains 1 to 5 mm long (fig. 6). Cores of some fiber bundles contain organic(?) carbon or spherical radiolaria(?).

Laminated barite consists of fine-grained aggregates and very fine-grained fiber bundles of barite crystals that are interconnected in a shale-siltstone matrix. Thin laminae of barite are frequently interlayered with folded, carbon-rich detritus and quartz grains. Some barite intrudes into the underlying sedimentary rock (fig. 7).

Composite barite consists of approximately 50 percent (by volume) barite grains 0.5 to 3 mm long in a matrix of organic carbon, white mica, and quartz-rich silt. Barite grains are distinctly elongated parallel to sedimentary layering. In thin section, they impart a texture superficially resembling trachyte (fig. 8).

Massive barite consists of light-gray-to-distinctly bluish, mostly very fine-grained, locally medium-grained, randomly oriented, dipyrarnidal barite crystals with very minor quartz and silt impurities. Massive barite in the Gagaryah deposit resembles micritic limestone elsewhere in the section and is chiefly distinguished by its anomalously high specific gravity.

Shales and siltstones above barite horizons (fig. 2) resemble similar units below the barite but differ by having a distinctive bluish or blue-gray, sooty alteration, and a lack of chert.

*Figure 3. Stratigraphic section showing barite-bearing sedimentary rock, Gagaryah barite deposit. Measured and sampled by T.K. Bundtzen, June 24, 1990, from outcrop in stream ravine dissecting main deposit. Barite content estimated visually.*

*Figure 5. Laminated and nodular barite section, discovery gully. Hammer provides scale.*

*Figure 6. Photomicrograph of fiberbundles of euhedral barite crystals under crossed nicols, Gagaryah deposit, Alaska.*

Two brachiopod-rich fossil localities 50 to 60 m stratigraphically above the barite mineralization are Frasnian (Gilbert and others, 1990). Possible equivalent units in the McGrath B-2 Quadrangle contain both Givetian (Middle Devonian) megafossils and Frasnian conodonts; all ages support a Middle to early Late Devonian age for the Gagaryah deposit.

## **GEOCHEMISTRY OF GAGARYAH DEPOSIT**

Fifteen chip-channel and composite-grab samples of barite mineralization and barren shale and chert were collected in the vicinity of the deposit to determine its major-, minor-, and trace-element contents (table 1). Geochemical results indicate that the Gagaryah deposit is deficient in alumina, base metals, strontium, and phosphorous, only slightly enriched in silver and bismuth, and contains no significant values of lead, zinc, or copper. Essentially only barium mineralization is present in the prospect. Strontium content ranges from 119 to 453 ppm and averages 264 ppm (0.026 percent). Although barite ( $\text{BaSO}_4$ ) forms a complete solid-solution series with celestite ( $\text{SrSO}_4$ ), the barium end member is heavily represented in the Gagaryah deposit.

Clastic and chemical sediments above and below the main barite horizon have contrasting geochemical

signatures. Overlying shales apparently have greater trace amounts of chromium, nickel, strontium, and vanadium than similar units below the barite. Mudstone in both sections contains near-equal trace-element levels of molybdenum (15 ppm), phosphorous (84 ppm), and iron (1.18 percent). Strata above and below the barite and the mineralization are deficient in alumina (shales = 0.88 percent Al; mineralization = 0.21 percent Al). These results indicate that host lithologies were probably not pelitic sediments, which typically average 15.6 percent  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  in continental margin environment (Krauskopf, 1969).

No total-carbon analyses are available; however, equivalent units in the McGrath Quadrangle yield values ranging from 1.4 to 3.5 percent total carbon, indicating that Devonian sediments in the Mystic terrane are carbon enriched.

Chip samples were systematically collected from channels in 39 m of the 51-m-thick barite zone in the discovery gully. Other channel samples were collected along strike. Barium values range from 26.06 to 56.92 percent (40 to 88 percent barite) and average 37.4 percent barium (58 percent barite) over the 39-m sample interval (fig. 3; table 1).

Five samples of massive barite range from 47.4 to 56.9 percent barium (73 to 88 percent barite) and average 53.3 percent barium (82 percent barite). A 3-kg sample

*Figure 7. Photomicrograph of fine-grained barite layer in contact with carbonaceous siltstone, Gagaryah deposit. Note load casts in plain light.*

at locality 10a (fig. 2) had a specific gravity of 4.24, indicating that massive barite lenses are acceptable for heavy-media well-drilling applications (Bundtzen and Henning, 1978); however, lower grade nodular- and laminated barite types, which predominate at the deposit, will probably require beneficiation for this application. Sulfur-isotope analyses of nodular and massive barite from the Gagaryah deposit yield  $S^{34}$  values of +20 and +24, respectively.

The volume of the Gagaryah deposit was estimated using our systematic surface sampling and the fence-line and half-square reserve models of Patterson (1959), Krige and Ueckermann (1963), and McKinstry (1948). We assume that the Gagaryah deposit is a narrow, trough-like body with a strike length of 640 m; thicknesses of 59 m, 7 m, and 6 m, determined at three localities along strike; and a downdip rate equal to about half of the surface strike at those three localities. Hence, inferred reserves probably amount to at least 1.08 million m<sup>3</sup>, or 2.3 million tonnes, of barite mineralization with an overall average grade of 37.4 percent barium or 57.0 percent barite. About 20 percent of the total, or 460,000 tonnes, is inferred to be massive barite lenses averaging 53 percent barium (81 percent barite). The remaining 1.84 million tonnes are inferred to consist of nodular, laminated, and composite mineralization averaging 33.5 percent barium (51 percent barite). These inferred reserves fall in the 130,000- to 30-million-tonne range commonly estimated for the bedded-barite model of Cox and Singer (1986).

## DEPOSIT CLASSIFICATION AND COMPARISONS WITH OTHER NORTH AMERICAN EXAMPLES

Stratiform barite deposits are thought to form by several syngenetic or diagenetic processes that include: (1) proximal deposition near a high-temperature hydrothermal vent; (2) distal barite precipitation from a vent along a redox interface; and (3) low-temperature and diagenetic barite formation related to oxygenation of a reduced, anoxic water mass (Poole, 1988; Lydon and others, 1985).

Field, isotopic, and petrographic evidence summarized here indicates that the Gagaryah deposit is probably formed syngenetically with barite rapidly precipitating in the water column from low-temperature hydrothermal fluids distal to exhalative vents (Lydon and others, 1985). The sulfur-isotope data compare closely with that estimated for Late Devonian seawater (Claypool and others, 1980). The absence of base metals precludes an association with proximal vent systems usually associated with volcanogenic massive-sulfide systems. Barite rosettes and nodules show no evidence of fabric expansion (fig. 6). Many finely laminated barite layers bear evidence of synsedimentary deformation, including load casting and slumping (fig. 7).

Table 2 compares the Gagaryah deposit with selected stratiform deposits in the North American Cordillera. The

*Figure 8. Photomicrograph of composite barite showing elongated barite grains subparallel to bedding, Gagaryah deposit, crossed nicols.*

Gagaryah deposit is similar in age and morphology to the East Northumberland Canyon deposits in Nevada (Graber and Chafetz, 1990) and the Atigun Canyon deposits in the central Brooks Range (Paris, 1977), but it lacks the phosphate and chert paragenesis associated with these primary bedded barite deposits, which are thought to be syngenetically formed from low-temperature brine seeps.

Barite deposits at Glacier Creek, Castle Islands, and Lime Point in southeastern Alaska (Hawley, 1976; Nokleberg and others, 1987; Herreid and others, 1978) and the Red Dog and Nimutuk properties in the western Brooks Range (Lange and others, 1985; Moore and others, 1986; Mayfield and others, 1979) clearly contrast with the

Gagaryah deposit because of their significant base-metal and silver values and volcanic-exhalative associations.

Although clearly lacking in basemetals, the Gagaryah deposit compares most favorably with the Middle to Late Devonian barite-sulfide and barite-only "sedex" deposits in northeastern British Columbia and in the Selwyn Basin of central Yukon. Those deposits are primarily in the Earn Group, a Devonian-Mississippian assemblage of carbonaceous and siliclastic marine strata that probably represents an episode of rifting or wrench faulting, or both, that interrupted passive-margin sedimentation in the outer parts of the Cordilleran miogeocline (Gordey and others, 1982). Barren barite deposits are widespread in the Earn Group but are best studied at MacMillan Pass in central Yukon. There, in the MacMillan Fold Belt, an unusual concentration of 15 barite deposits—including the Walt, Hess, Tryala and North Gary deposits—compares closely in morphology, age, and stratigraphic position with the Gagaryah deposit (table 2). Barite deposits in the MacMillan Pass area are peripheral to and both pre-date and postdate the nearby Tom and Jason exhalative zinc-lead-silver deposits (Abbott and Turner, 1990). We note similarities between the stratigraphic section at the Gagaryah deposit (fig. 2) and that part of the Earn Group which hosts most barite deposits in the MacMillan Pass area.

We have speculated in past years that the Dillinger and Mystic terranes in the western Alaska Range represent fragments of Paleozoic continental margins right-laterally offset by the Tintina and related transcurrent faults from stratigraphically equivalent units in Selwyn Basin of Yukon Territory. The Earn Group may be equivalent to parts of the lower Mystic terrane in the western Alaska Range; similarities of barite mineralization in both areas strengthen this correlation. Canadian models for MacMillan Pass stratiform-barite  $\pm$  sulfide deposits (Abbott and Turner, 1990) imply that separate sulfide-rich deposits could exist within a few kilometers of barren barite deposits like the Gagaryah deposit.

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# GEOLOGY AND GEOCHEMISTRY OF TATLAWIKSUK HOT SPRINGS, A NEWLY DISCOVERED GEOTHERMAL AREA IN WESTERN ALASKA

By

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## INTRODUCTION

In June 1989, in the upper Kuskokwim River area of western Alaska, a previously unreported geothermal area was briefly evaluated (fig.1). This report describes the bedrock geology, spring geochemistry, and potential of the geothermal area—herein named Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs after the nearby Tatlawiksuk River.

## HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, AND ACCESS

Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs is located approximately 102 km in a S. 4° W. direction from McGrath, the region's largest transportation and supply center. The geothermal area covers 4 ha at an elevation of 146 m along a small, unnamed stream in NW 1/4, sec. 31, T. 23 N., R. 35 W., Seward Meridian, McGrath A-6 Quadrangle (fig.1). The stream flows south 6 km to Tatlawiksuk River, which in turn flows southwest about 120 km to the Kuskokwim River about 90 km upstream from the village of Stony River.

The hot springs are situated in a wooded lowland and wetland immediately south of an isolated, 90-km<sup>2</sup> upland, herein informally referred to as Tatlawiksuk Hills. Elevations in the study area range from 432 ft (132 m) along Tatlawiksuk River to 1,510 ft (460 m) in the western Tatlawiksuk Hills. The area is transitional between the Kuskokwim Mountains, Big River Hills, and Alaska Range-Lyman Hills provinces (Wahrhaftig, 1965).

The geothermal area is remote and is separated from the Kuskokwim Mountains 29 km to the west by alternating belts of peat-rich wetlands and deciduous to coniferous forests. No trails or FAA-approved airports exist in the study area; the nearest airstrip is at White Mountain mercury mine 51 km east-northeast of Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs near Big River.

Previous regional and statewide surveys of geothermal resources do not mention a geothermal field near Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs (Waring, 1917; Miller, 1973;

Miller and others, 1975; Motyka and others, 1983). The nearest geothermal area is at Chuilnik Springs about 140 km to the southwest.

The presence of Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs was first suspected during casual conversations with air-taxi pilots, who noted conspicuous water vapor or steam while flying over the Selatna-Tatlawiksuk River area. However, repeated DGGs overflights of a 200 km<sup>2</sup> area from 1984 to 1988 failed to locate the steam anomaly. While making a reconnaissance overflight on June 20, 1989, Bundtzen noted lush vegetation, conspicuous mineral precipitate, and a steam plume; a geothermal area was confirmed during a visit to the site on June 21, 1989.

## REGIONAL GEOLOGY

About 85 percent of the exposed bedrock near the thermal area consists of micaceous, medium-gray, lithic sandstone (Kkss), and argillite and siltstone (Kksh) of the Kuskokwim Group (fig.1) (Cady and others, 1955). The age of the Kuskokwim Group is determined by Cenomanian and Turonian pelecypod fossils; however, rarer fossils as young as Maastrichtian age have also been identified.

Intruding the Cretaceous clastic rocks are poorly exposed, sill-like bodies of biotite quartz monzonite and biotite-hornblende quartz diorite (Tkqm). Noradiometric age control is available for the immediate geothermal area; however, a <sup>40</sup>K-<sup>40</sup>Ar date of 61.1 ± 1.8 Ma (sample site 78BT321) was obtained for geologically and geochemically similar plutonic rocks in the Selatna Hills about 10 km north of Tatlawiksuk Hills. We believe that plutonic rocks in the study area are probably early Tertiary, which is typical of many plutonic complexes of the central Kuskokwim area (Bundtzen and Miller, in press).

A conspicuous 25-km<sup>2</sup> area of dark-gray, massive, recrystallized, chlorite-biotite, porphyroblastic hornfels (Kkhf) underlies most of the central Tatlawiksuk Hills. This hornfels aureole indicates that the small sill-like plutonic rocks of quartz monzonite and diorite (Tkqm) are manifestations of a much larger intrusive mass at depth.

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Figure 1. Simplified geologic and location maps, southwestern McGrath A-6 Quadrangle, Alaska.

Quaternary deposits are subdivided by photogeology and ground reconnaissance. An areally extensive colluvial-alluvial fan-terrace complex (Qof) is derived from the higher, more dissected Lyman Hills east of the study area (Gilbert, 1981). Most of the area, including Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs, is underlain by an undifferentiated unit of alluvial, colluvial, and eolian deposits (Qu), including talus and alluvial-colluvial aprons on moderate to steep hill slopes, ice-rich eolian deposits of silt and finesand in valley fills, and silt fans overlain by poorly drained wetlands.

Cretaceous sedimentary rocks have been deformed by compression into open to isoclinal folds—many during post-early Tertiary time. A younger, distinctive set of N. 5 to 10° E.-striking, high-angle faults cut all bedrock units. One such fault juxtaposes hornfels and unaltered sandstone and siltstone in the western Tatlawiksuk Hills; this fault continues south directly through the Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs geothermal area (fig. 1).

Many hot springs in interior and western Alaska are associated with faulted intrusive contacts (Miller, 1973; Miller and others, 1975). Structurally weak zones in competent rock units such as granitic plutons provide pathways through which circulating meteoric waters can be heated at depth and moved upward to the surface.

## SURFACE FEATURES

A 4-ha surface area in the vicinity of Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs contains anomalous vegetation, hydrothermally altered bedrock float and Quaternary alluvium, and several bubbling hot-water anomalies (fig. 2). Anomalous vegetation consists of lush meadow grasses, ferns, victory onion (*Allium victorialis*), wild chive (*Allium schoenoprasum*) and skunk cabbage(?) (*Lysichiton americanum*). Thick mats of green algae cover bubbling seeps and wetlands, where measured water temperatures exceed 30°C (fig. 2).

Light, varicolored gray-to-limonitic, sinterous hydrothermal-mineral precipitate cements gravelly stream alluvium in the southern part of the map area (fig. 2). However, no quantitative identifications of alteration minerals or precipitate were completed. Incutbanks along the south-flowing stream that bisects the area, alluvium appears to be cemented or silicified into a hard silicrete, indicating a much larger area of hydrothermal alteration is present beneath vegetative cover.

Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs consist of three distinct hot-water anomalies in an elongate, 60- by 180-m area oriented along a N. 5 to 10° E. trend parallel to the high-angle fault zone that is traceable through the geothermal area.

One of the three bubbling hot-water anomalies (figs. 2 and 3) is cribbed with timbers that appear to be old,

notched, square sets in the style of pre-World War I interior Alaska thermal spring developments at Circle, Tolovana, and Manley Hot Springs (Waring, 1917). Therefore, we speculate that Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs was developed during the gold-rush era in the early 20th century, but after the discoveries of gold in the nearby Innoko district in 1906 and Iditarod district in 1909 (Bundtzen and Kline, 1986).

## GEOCHEMISTRY AND GEOTHERMOMETRY

Temperatures of the spring waters ranged from 20° to 68°C. The pH values measured in the field ranged from 7.58 to 8.41 (n=4) for the hottest spring. Flow rates could not be measured due to the shallow channels, numerous seeps coming from the gravels, and the probable existence of seeps directly into the divided stream bed. Gas bubbled vigorously from the hottest pools, where the odor of H<sub>2</sub>S was strongest. Chemical analyses of hot-spring and creek waters are given in table 1. Alkalinity (HCO<sub>3</sub>) must be considered a minimum because the sample was not titrated until it was returned to the lab. Normally, the chemical-charge balance for hot-springs systems should be 0 ± 5 percent. The high chemical-charge balance of +10.5 percent obtained from Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs (table 1) may be due to (1) loss of CO<sub>2</sub> during transit of the sample or (2) an excess of cations—especially sodium—because analyzed values have a standard deviation of 10 percent. For example, if sodium was lowered from 110 ppm to 100 ppm (table 1), the resultant chemical-charge balance could change from +10.5 to +2.8 percent.

Chemically, Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs is classified as a fairly alkaline, low-chlorine, sodium-bicarbonate spring (Mahon and others, 1981), comparable to other Alaska hot springs that are related to granitic plutons. These low-temperature geothermal systems are not normally associated with active volcanism. Chemical constituents in the water were probably leached from intrusive host rocks. Except for fluorine, which should be 2.5 ppm or less (Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs had a fluorine value of 22 ppm), water from Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs meets Alaska drinking-water standards. High-fluoride drinking water is known to cause brown discoloration in teeth of children and adolescents but does not affect adults. Elevated fluorine values in Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs might be derived from dissolution of biotite from plutonic rocks or hornfels (Tkqm, TKhf) or, alternatively, from dissolution of fluorite in the pluton or in associated mineral deposits.

Reservoir temperatures were estimated using silica and cation geothermometers (table 2). All calculations are based on temperature-dependent water-rock reactions and assume equilibrium is reached in the reservoir.

Figure 2. *Sketch of Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs showing anomalous temperature gradients in wetlands and anomalous ground features.*

The alkaline nature of Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs (pH = 8.41) necessitates reduction of the silica value by 10 percent before the silica geothermometer can be reliably applied (Fournier, 1981). Thus, reservoir temperatures for uncorrected silica values range from 97° to 125°C, and calculations based on the pH-corrected silica value range from 91° to 120°C.

The cation geothermometer used in this study calculates reservoir temperatures based on ratios of Na/K or Na-K-Ca (table 2). The Na-K method yields temperatures ranging from 146° to 152°C, whereas the Na-K-Ca method provides temperature ranges of 128° to 130°C. Hence, the Na-K-Ca geothermometer more closely agrees with results obtained by the silica-quartz conductive geothermometer. We conclude that 125°C  $\pm$  5° is a good estimate of reservoir temperatures for Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs.

Miller and others (1975) determined that the source of many interior Alaska hot springs is meteoric waters that have circulated several kilometers down faults or fractures in competent host rocks. The standard geothermal gradient of 25°C per km, coupled with the estimated reservoir temperature (table 2), indicates that meteoric waters have circulated to depths of 5 to 6 km before emanating to the surface at Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs.

## GEOTHERMAL POTENTIAL

Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs is typical of many interior Alaska geothermal areas, including the Chena, Tolovana, Kanuti, and Mellozi geothermal areas. All of these hot springs are associated with faulted contacts between granitic plutons and less-competent host lithologies. Reservoir temperatures calculated for Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs probably preclude a super-heated steam environment capable of generating electric power. In addition, the remoteness of the site will limit recreational or agricultural applications in the near future.

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Figure 3. *Remains of former wood cribbing around main discharge area of Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs. South-flowing, cold stream in right background.*

The silica geothermometer uses the absolute (total) silica value in solution and assumes that geothermal waters remain undiluted during ascent to the surface. According to Fournier (1981), quartz appears to control the dissolved-silica concentration in geothermal waters exceeding 150°C, and chalcedony controls aqueous-silica content for lower temperatures. However, in granitic terranes like Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs, quartz may control aqueous silica to temperatures as low as 90°C.

Table 1. *Geochemistry of waters from Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs. All analyses in ppm*

Constituent	Hot spring	Cold stream
T	68°C	7°C
pH	8.4	nd <sup>a</sup>
SiO <sub>2</sub> <sup>b</sup>	80.0	6.2
Na <sup>c</sup>	110.0	2.25
K <sup>d</sup>	4.15	0.17
Ca <sup>e</sup>	17.8	1.70
Mg <sup>e</sup>	0.64	1.25
Li <sup>f</sup>	0.59	nd <sup>a</sup>
HCO <sub>3</sub> <sup>g</sup>	118.0	nd <sup>a</sup>
SO <sub>4</sub> <sup>h</sup>	18.4	4.2
Cl <sup>i</sup>	23.3	0.21
F <sup>j</sup>	22.0	0.21
H <sub>2</sub> S <sup>k</sup>	3.74	nd <sup>a</sup>
Conductance	490.0	nd <sup>a</sup>
Total dissolved solids	374.0	nd <sup>a</sup>
Chemical charge balance	+10.5%	nd <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>nd = not done<sup>b</sup>Colorimetric: formation and reduction of silicomolybdate<sup>c</sup>Directly coupled plasma technique (DCP), 2,000 ppm K added<sup>d</sup>DCP, 2,000 ppm Na added<sup>e</sup>DCP, LaCl<sub>3</sub> added<sup>f</sup>DCP<sup>g</sup>Titration using H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub><sup>h</sup>Conversion to H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>; then titration with BaCl<sub>2</sub> in presence of thion indicator<sup>i</sup>Mohr titration with AgNO<sub>3</sub><sup>j</sup>Direct reading using specific ion electrode<sup>k</sup>Preservation with Zn acetate, then titration with Na thiosulfate in presence of iodineTable 2. *Estimated reservoir temperatures for Tatlawiksuk Hot Springs using silica and cation geothermometers*<sup>a</sup>

Geothermometer	Estimated reservoir temperatures (in degrees °C)	
Silica geothermometers	Si = 80 ppm (as analyzed)	Si = 72 ppm (pH corrected)
Quartz conductive	125	120
Quartz adiabatic	122	118
Chalcedony	97	91
Cation Geothermometers	Na = 110 ppm; K = 4.15 ppm (as analyzed)	Na = 100 ppm; K = 4.15 ppm (Na reduced)
Na-K	146	152
Na-K-Ca	128	130

<sup>a</sup>Calculations based on techniques described by Fournier (1981).

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# GEOLOGY AND GEOCHEMISTRY OF THE SLEITAT MOUNTAIN TIN DEPOSIT, SOUTHWESTERN ALASKA

By  
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## INTRODUCTION

Significant tin-tungsten mineralization is associated with quartz-topaz-white mica-tourmaline greisen alteration of a multi-unit, peraluminous, granite stock that intrudes Kuskokwim Group flysch of Cretaceous age in southwestern Alaska. The granite stock has a surface exposure of <2 km<sup>2</sup> and is surrounded by an aureole of quartz-topaz-tourmaline-veined hornfels. The stock consists of increasingly altered outer biotite granite, intermediate biotite-muscovite granite, and central zinnwaldite granite units. Mineralization is confined to two east-striking, steeply dipping, tabular lenses of

greisen-altered granite interleaved with weakly unaltered granite. North and south greisen zones are estimated to contain an inferred resource of 58 to 96 million kg of tin in 25.9 million metric tonnes of mineralized rock (Burleigh, 1991).

## GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND ACCESS

The Sleitat Mountain tin deposit is located in sec. 31, T. 1 S., R. 45 W., Seward Meridian in the Taylor Mountains Quadrangle (fig. 1) approximately 135 km northeast of Dillingham and 129 km west-northwest of Iliamna,

Figure 1. *Location map of Sleitat mountain tin deposit.*

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Alaska. The deposit occupies the highest part of a small range of elongate, northeast-trending hills in which Sleitat Mountain is the highest peak.

## GEOLOGY

Discovered in 1983, the tin deposit at Sleitat Mountain is the only known major tin mineralization in the region. The granite stock that hosts the tin deposit intrudes Kuskokwim Group flysch deposits of late Early Cretaceous to Late Cretaceous age (Wallace and Engebretson, 1984). The stock is approximately 8 km northwest of the Mulchatna fault system. A single K-Ar age of  $56.8 \pm 2.8$  Ma (Teledyne Isotopes Laboratories) was determined for a coarse-muscovite mineral separate from a 0.8-cm-thick muscovite veinlet related to tin mineralization.

The granite stock at Sleitat Mountain is essentially elliptical and has a mappable thermal aureole. Associated volcanic rocks, if formerly present, have been eroded. Northeast-striking dikes apparently extend outward from the stock parallel to the Mulchatna fault.

At least two types of felsic dike rock are present on all sides of the stock. Contact relations of the dikes to the stock are obscure, so the relative timing of their emplacement is unknown. A hornfels aureole produced by thermal metamorphism of the flysch generally extends 460 to 610 m into country rock surrounding the stock.

### Igneous Petrology

Igneous rocks of the Sleitat granite stock consist of three units that are mineralogically, petrologically, and geochemically distinct. Granitic units are only mapped according to spatial distribution of residual rubble crop (fig. 2). Small, scattered concentrations of biotite granite too small to map are present in rubble crop near the margins of the stock. The zinnwaldite granite unit apparently forms the core of the stock with apophyses extending into a partial shell of biotite-muscovite granite. Distribution of granitic units, coupled with geochemical and petrographic evidence discussed below, indicates that the three units represent a concentric alteration pattern that decreases in intensity toward the margins.

Differences in texture and grain size are subtle between the three granite units. The granite is generally composed of fine- to medium-grained (up to 8 mm) quartz, alkali feldspar (perthite), plagioclase (albite)  $\pm$  biotite  $\pm$  muscovite  $\pm$  tourmaline, topaz, and garnet. Textures range from weakly porphyritic to weakly seriate hypidiomorphic in the biotite and biotite-muscovite granites. Zinnwaldite granite exhibits textures that range from graphic hypidiomorphic equigranular to microscale

allotriomorphic seriate (fig. 3). In all three units, perthite and quartz exhibit bimodal size distribution, but size difference is generally less than a factor of 10.

Perthite in biotite and biotite-muscovite granite units contain approximately 35-45 percent exsolved albite lamellae, whereas perthite in zinnwaldite granite contains approximately 5-15 percent albite lamellae. Plagioclase increases from 5-10 modal percent in biotite granite to 25-30 modal percent in zinnwaldite granite. Biotite in biotite granite is red brown and exhibits minor green alteration. Biotite in the biotite-muscovite granite is bleached, pale brown to brown gray in thin section and is commonly altered to white mica. White mica is usually associated with topaz and tourmaline and some white mica in the zinnwaldite granite is distinctly light gray brown and pleochroic. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) analysis indicates that the white mica is probably zinnwaldite (Burleigh, 1991).

Topaz is present (<1 percent) in all granite units but is increasingly more abundant in biotite-muscovite and zinnwaldite granite units, respectively, as interstitial, anhedral, and rare, disseminated, euhedral grains. Tourmaline is a common interstitial mineral in biotite-muscovite granite and zinnwaldite granite.

Identified two types of dike rock at Sleitat Mountain. A third type, biotite-quartz porphyry, has been identified by a geologist of Cominco Alaska Exploration but was not observed or sampled during my investigations. Muscovite-quartz-feldspar porphyry and quartz-feldspar porphyry dikes strike east-northeast and are scattered over a distance of 5.6 km outward from the stock. Muscovite-quartz-feldspar porphyry dikes are composed of about 35-40 percent 0.5- to 8.0-mm diam. anhedral-to-subhedral grains of alkali feldspar, quartz, muscovite, with lesser albite plagioclase in an aphanitic groundmass of feldspar, quartz, and muscovite (fig. 3). Muscovite-quartz-feldspar porphyry dikes represent altered counterparts of the quartz-feldspar porphyry dikes as indicated by microveinlets and patchy disseminations of muscovite and tourmaline, a coarsening of groundmass, and turbid alteration of feldspar phenocrysts.

### Deposit Morphology

Tin mineralization is present at Sleitat Mountain in all types of granitic rock and in the enclosing hornfels. The bulk of the mineralization is confined to two zones composed of steeply dipping, tabular bodies of greisen alteration along the southern margin and in the northern part of the stock (fig. 2). Central quartz veinlets up to a few centimeters thick and often containing high concentrations (up to 50-60 percent) of fine- to coarse-grained cassiterite are the loci of greisen alteration in the tabular

Figure 2. *Geology and sample locations of compound granite stock and associated tin-tungsten greisen, Sleitat Mountain. Samples 1, 7, and 8 are located outside the above map area and can be located in Burleigh (1991, fig. 6).*

bodies. Thicknesses of individual greisen masses range from several centimeters to 6 m, and these masses are separated by zones of mildly altered to unaltered granites. Zones of greisen mineralization consist of about 50 percent greisen-altered granite interleaved with mildly altered to unaltered granite and extend for at least 975

m in length; their widths vary from 30 to 240 m (fig. 2). Greisen alteration is also a consequence of wolframite-arsenopyrite veining. However, the dimensions and characteristics of greisen alteration associated with these veins are difficult to determine in rubble crop.

In hornfels, coarse-grained quartz and rare quartz-topaz veins crosscut sedimentary layers and fill tensional fractures and partings along bedding in metasedimentary rocks. These veins contain up to several percent fine- to coarse-grained cassiterite and minor amounts of wolframite. Discordant veins range in thickness up to 0.46 m and strike up to 60 m in rubble trains of vein material. Quartz-cassiterite veins that developed along tensional fractures were found only in scree accumulations, so their continuity and widths could not be established.

### **Alteration**

A diversity of gangue- and ore-mineral suites is present in selected samples of mineralized rock. In tabular, steeply dipping greisen bodies that make up the bulk of the deposit, variable amounts of quartz, topaz, tourmaline, and white mica form a typical alteration assemblage. Concentrations of 10 to 15 percent topaz are not uncommon in the greisen, whereas tourmaline rarely exceeds 3 to 5 percent. Greisen-altered granite contains numerous scattered voids that may be relicts of incomplete

replacement of feldspar and phyllosilicate minerals by alteration minerals. Most surface rubble is coated with iron oxide and lesser amounts of arsenic oxide (scorodite), indicating that sulfide minerals formerly occupied 1 to 5 percent of the rock. Oxidation and leaching of these sulfide minerals also contributed to the characteristically porous texture of the greisen.

### **Ore Mineralogy**

Principal ore minerals include cassiterite, arsenopyrite, loellingite, sphalerite, and wolframite. Trace amounts of stannite, chalcopyrite, pyrite, bismite, bismuth-arsenic compounds, and ferrotantalite were also identified by scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Secondary hematite and arsenic oxides are widely distributed in weathered greisen samples.

Cassiterite is the primary ore mineral. Grains of disseminated cassiterite in massive greisen bodies are generally less than 1 mm in diameter. Medium- to coarse-grained cassiterite (1-15 mm) is present in high concentrations in narrow quartz veinlets within greisen

Figure 3. Photograph showing rock textures for (A) biotite granite, (B) biotite-muscovite granite, (C) zinnwaldite granite, and (D) feldspar-porphyry dike.

masses and in hornfels. Open-space veinlets of coarse topaz with crystals of cassiterite and wolframite are rare in these rocks.

Wolframite is scattered throughout the deposit, mostly as medium-to-coarse (up to 2 cm), tabular grains in massive-to-vuggy, coarse-grained quartz veins that are generally peripheral to greisen zones and in the hornfels. These veins attain widths up to 0.6 m and apparently represent a distinct mineralizing pulse. Fine-grained wolframite is also present as a trace constituent in tin-rich, massive greisen.

Arsenic minerals are distributed throughout the deposit. Clots of arsenopyrite (up to 2.5 cm) are common in coarse-grained, quartz-white mica-wolframite veins. Locally, relatively unaltered and foliated biotite-muscovite granite contains about 5 percent disseminated loellingite ( $\text{FeAs}_2$ ) in association with minute amounts of arsenopyrite and inclusions of bismite (bismuth oxide). However, disseminated arsenopyrite is the primary arsenic mineral and is present in concentrations up to 5 percent in greisen-altered granitic rocks in the absence of loellingite. Micron-sized inclusions of bismite and a bismuth-arsenic mineral were identified in the arsenopyrite by SEM analysis.

Sphalerite is rare; however, a few specimens were found to contain up to 0.5 percent sphalerite as disseminated grains. Sphalerite contains micron-sized inclusions of bornite, chalcopyrite, and stannite. Coarser grains (approximately 400  $\mu\text{m}$ ) of stannite adjoin grain boundaries of sphalerite and are present as disseminated grains in these zinc-rich samples. A single, 30- $\mu\text{m}$  grain of ferrotantalite was identified in greisen-altered granite during SEM analysis.

## GEOCHEMISTRY

### geochemistry of Mineralized Rocks

A limited sampling program was conducted to determine a tin-resource estimate for the deposit (Burleigh, 1991). The tin grade of greisen and granite and the density of greisen bodies in the north zone were estimated by taking four, 122- to 183-m-long chip samples across the rubble. Sample chips were collected at 0.9-m intervals and sorted into a composite granite and a composite greisen sample per line (fig. 2). Analytical results from this sampling program are presented in table 1, and a tin-resource estimate is discussed by Burleigh (1991).

The first three samples (15-17) in table 1 represent the center of the northern greisen zone; tin, tungsten, and silver are uniformly distributed in these granite and greisen samples. However, the fourth sample in table 1 demonstrates thinning of greisen veins at the western edge of the northern greisen zone, where the greisen:granite ratio is lower. In this westernmost sample site, thin (mm-scale) cassiterite-bearing veinlets are present in some granite chips, which accounts for higher tin values than in greisen samples. As a rule, I avoided obviously high-grade, coarse-grained cassiterite veinlets during sampling of the massive greisen-altered granite to eliminate nugget effects. Therefore, tin concentration in these samples is underestimated.

A 816-kg bulk sample collected from the center of the northern greisen zone assayed 3,700 ppm tin (0.37 percent Sn) (table 2), which probably better represents the grade of the deposit than the four chip samples. A multi-element analysis of the bulk sample documents only minor base- and rare-metal concentrations (table 2). Information provided by H.E. Farnstrom (written commun., 1990) indicates that at least one drill hole at Sleitat Mountain intersected 14.54 m (true width) of 1.56 percent tin and

Table 1. Analytical data for chip samples located in figure 2

Sample	Rock type	Number of chips	Sn ppm	W ppm	Ag ppm	Nb ppm	Ta ppm
15	Greisen	83	1,900	150	16.7	23	<3
	Granite	84	120	45	0.7	26	<3
16	Greisen	82	2,900	110	13.1	30	<3
	Granite	69	75	45	1.0	32	9
17	Greisen	99	3,100	110	11.2	18	12
	Granite	96	930	45	2.5	26	<3
18	Greisen	52	880	150	7.0	33	<3
	Granite	85	2,100	900	7.4	24	9

Table 2. Multi-element analysis of the 816-kg greisen bulk sample located at map location 20, figure 2

Ag = 17 ppm	Eu = <2 ppm	Rb = 90 ppm	Te = <20 ppm
As = 3,480 ppm	Fe = 1.8 %	Sb = 382 ppm	Th = 8.2 ppm
Au = 19 ppb	Ga = 11 ppm	Sc = 4.8 ppm	Tl = 0.8 ppm
Bi = 32 ppm	La = 12 ppm	Se = <10 ppm	U = 7.0 ppm
Cd = <57 ppm	Mo = <6 ppm	Sm = 2.4 ppm	W = 432 ppm
Ce = 16 ppm	Ni = <50 ppm	Sn = 3,700 ppm	Y = 35 ppm
Co = <10 ppm	Nb = 27 ppm	Ta = 8 ppm	Yb = <5 ppm
Cs = 7 ppm	Pb = 236 ppm	Tb = <1 ppm	

0.81 oz/tonne silver; this interval includes an interval of 1.54 m (true width) that grades 12.55 percent tin and 5.17 oz/tonne silver. Drilling by Cominco Alaska Exploration has confirmed appreciable tin mineralization to a vertical depth of 91.4 m and has yet to encounter the base of the mineralized system (H.E. Farnstrom, written commun., 1990).

#### MAJOR-ELEMENT GEOCHEMISTRY OF GRANITIC ROCKS

Spatial and temporal relations of granitic units at Sleitat Mountain cannot be adequately established due to lack of outcrop. Selected plots of whole-rock major elements (fig. 4a-e) define trends in major-element compositions interpreted to represent alteration of a fractionated granite by late-stage hydrothermal fluids. These plots document systematic increases of  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ , and peraluminous index (molecular  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3/\text{Na}_2\text{O} + \text{CaO} + \text{K}_2\text{O} > 1$  is peraluminous) and concomitant decreases of  $\text{SiO}_2$ ,  $\text{K}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{CaO}$ , and  $\text{TiO}_2$  from marginal biotite granite to core zinnwaldite granite. These variations can be attributed to an increase in alteration intensity from the margin to the core of the stock. A variation diagram of ferrous and ferric iron oxides (fig. 4f) provides evidence for the moderately low oxidation state of the magma from which the granite crystallized. Results of major- and trace-element analyses are listed in table 3.

Depletion of  $\text{TiO}_2$  can be linked to alteration of biotite and depletion of  $\text{CaO}$  and  $\text{K}_2\text{O}$  (fig. 4b-c), probably by albitization ( $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ -enrichment) of the stock core. Silica depletion (fig. 4b) in the core probably resulted from removal of  $\text{SiO}_2$  by late-stage fractionation of a vapor phase that produced extensive greisen alteration. Enrichment of  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  (fig. 4e) can be attributed to alteration of feldspars to white mica and the increasing presence of topaz from the margin to the core of the stock.

Hudson and Arth (1983) concluded that a positive correlation between  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  and Differentiation Index (DI) (Thorton and Tuttle, 1960) in the most differentiated (fine-grained equigranular) phases of Seward Peninsula

tin-granites represents an evolutionary trend in crystallization. They suggested that development of this "albite trend" is evidence for vapor-phase saturation of the melt during crystallization. Plots of weight percent  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  versus DI for Sleitat Mountain granites (fig. 4a) indicate a progressive increase in  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  but only weakly define an albite trend relative to DI. This increase in  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  coincides with increasing albite in the granite core.

In terms of  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{SiO}_2$ ,  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ , and  $\text{K}_2\text{O}$  and based on data from Tischendorf (1977), the Sleitat Mountain granite is geochemically similar to the average tin-granite. Plots of  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$  versus DI (fig. 4a) indicate that the Sleitat Mountain granite is slightly more evolved than the average tin-granite.

#### TRACE-ELEMENT GEOCHEMISTRY OF THE GRANITIC ROCKS

Although trace-element analyses for lithium, fluorine, and boron were not obtained for Sleitat Mountain granites, increases in the amounts of tourmaline (containing boron) and topaz (containing fluorine) in biotite-muscovite granite and zinnwaldite granite indicate increasing boron and fluorine with progressive alteration, as noted in tin-granites elsewhere (Swanson and others, 1988; Manning and Hill, 1990). The typical pattern of trace-element distribution from biotite granite to zinnwaldite granite in the Sleitat Mountain stock is decreasing barium and strontium and increasing rubidium (table 3, samples 5, 13, 14). These trends are consistent with fractional-crystallization models demonstrated by McCarthy and Hasty (1976). However, the enrichment of rubidium and depletion of barium and strontium are probably responses to the alteration of feldspars to white mica and to albitization.

Zirconium, niobium, cerium, and yttrium are useful indicators of magmatic trends because they are generally insensitive to hydrothermal alteration (Alderton and others, 1980). However, plots of gallium versus rubidium, zirconium, niobium, and yttrium in the Sleitat Mountain granite (figs. 5a-e) exhibit trends that can be interpreted to represent a single melt fraction that was systematically

Figure 4. *Whole-rock major-element variation diagrams comparing three granites at Sleitat Mountain. Analytical data on which these plots are based are listed in table 3.*

Table 3. *Major-oxide and trace-element analyses of igneous rocks, Sleitat Mountain tin deposit*

[Note: Ba, Nb, Rb, Sr, Zr, Y, Sn, Ce, Ga, analyzed by X-ray fluorescence, except where noted. Whole-rock oxides analyzed by DC plasma emission after HF-HNO<sub>3</sub>-HClO<sub>4</sub>-HCl extraction, except for FeO. FeO analyzed by titrametric methods. \* Denotes analysis by isotope dilution.]

Sample <sup>a</sup>	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> wt. pct	CaO wt. pct	Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> wt. pct	FeO wt. pct	K <sub>2</sub> O wt. pct	LOI wt. pct	MgO wt. pct	MnO wt. pct	Na <sub>2</sub> O wt. pct	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> wt. pct	SiO <sub>2</sub> wt. pct	TiO <sub>2</sub> wt. pct	Totals wt. pct
1	14.30	.17	.44	.13	3.90	1.41	.07	.02	3.40	.14	74.80	.02	98.80
2	13.20	.23	.43	.83	4.93	.53	.05	.06	3.52	.10	75.30	.03	99.21
3	13.90	.21	.18	.70	4.33	.68	.02	.06	4.48	<.01	73.80	<.01	98.36
4	13.10	.33	.36	.83	4.68	.67	.05	.06	3.70	.15	74.40	.02	98.35
5	13.80	.34	.37	.57	4.51	.72	.04	.07	3.92	.07	75.20	.01	99.62
6	13.40	.33	.51	.76	5.59	.51	.04	.13	3.55	.17	74.80	<.01	99.79
7	15.20	.27	.79	.57	2.15	1.45	.35	.05	4.85	.19	73.90	.12	99.89
8	13.60	.13	.54	.19	4.77	1.13	.11	.01	3.70	.05	74.90	.03	99.16
9	15.00	.34	.31	.26	4.37	1.04	.18	<.01	3.93	.10	74.00	.12	99.65
10	14.00	.18	.35	.64	4.19	.60	.04	.05	4.09	.16	73.80	.01	98.11
11	13.80	.19	.60	.45	4.31	.37	.02	.06	4.20	.18	73.90	<.01	98.08
12	13.20	.47	.38	.76	4.75	.37	.05	.06	3.86	.17	75.20	.03	99.30
13	14.40	.17	.62	.64	4.20	.48	.02	.09	4.38	.12	75.60	.01	100.73
14	12.60	.55	.31	.64	5.03	.58	.06	.04	3.43	.10	74.80	.04	98.18

  

Sample	Ba ppm	Nb ppm	Rb ppm	Sr ppm	Zr ppm	Y ppm	Sn ppm	Ce ppm	Ga ppm	Rock type
1	<20	23	305	9	43	8	37	<5	34	Feldspar porphyry dike
2	<20	23	425	<5	47	43	91	40	57	Biotite-muscovite granite
3	<20	22	460	<5	24	38	200	10	70	Zinnwaldite granite
4	30	27	395	<5	46	51	25	27	39	Biotite-muscovite granite
5	<20	25	279.4*	10.3*	39	37	29	20	34	Biotite-muscovite granite
6	<20	18	295	<5	38	54	21	13	16	Biotite-muscovite granite
7	230	23	150	160	53	13	25	15	25	Muscovite porphyry dike
8	600	23	240	81	44	26	29	27	43	Feldspar porphyry dike
9	160	18	230	30	39	20	19	16	59	Muscovite porphyry dike
10	<20	21	505	<5	34	41	22	13	83	Zinnwaldite granite
11	<20	21	465	<5	25	34	31	15	73	Zinnwaldite granite
12	30	21	335	9	41	54	34	33	45	Biotite-muscovite granite
13	<20	28	594.6*	2.1*	30	38	18	29	56	Zinnwaldite granite
14	150	22	205.0*	25.96*	58	45	15	29	12	Biotite granite

<sup>a</sup>Located in figure 2.



altered from the core to the margins. Gallium remains mobile in a melt as a  $(\text{GaF}_6)^{-3}$  complex in fluorine-rich magmas (Collins and others, 1980). Gallium also tends to concentrate in plagioclase, substituting for aluminum, and is preferentially excluded from An-rich plagioclase (Collins and others, 1980). Therefore, gallium enrichment may be a function of the crystallization of topaz and albite in the stock core. Zirconium and, to a lesser

extent, yttrium exhibit depletion trends from stock margin to core (figs. 5a-b). Alderton and others (1980) observed strong depletions of zirconium in similar granitic rocks as a result of tourmalinization and kaolinization and attributed these losses to the destruction of zircon during replacement of biotite by tourmaline. Hill and Manning (1987) observed that inclusion-free "brown" mica (bleached biotite at Sleitat Mountain) in a topaz granite was

*Figure 5. Trace-element variation diagram comparing three granites at Sleitat Mountain. Analytical data on which these plots are based are listed in table 3.*

derived by alteration of zircon-bearing biotite. Increased tourmalinization and formation of bleached biotite and zinnwaldite in core granites of the Sleitat Mountain stock also indicate zirconium depletion resulted from alteration and is not a function of melt fractionation.

Yttrium exhibits a similar but weaker depletion trend (fig. 5b), implying mobilization in response to hydrothermal alteration. Niobium exhibits no enrichment or depletion trends in the granitic units (fig. 5c) or greisen-altered rocks, indicating that niobium is immobile during progressive greisen alteration. Clustering of niobium values also indicates that magmatic fractionation had little, if any, role in zonation of the stock.

In general, cerium is weakly depleted in the direction of biotite-biotite-muscovite-zinnwaldite granites (fig. 5d). In late-stage, equigranular fractions of tin-granites on Seward Peninsula, Hudson and Arth (1983) observed a cerium gradient and suggested that cerium is depleted along with other volatiles during late stages of crystallization.

## DISCUSSION

Concentration of tin in late-magmatic differentiates and in magmatic fluids is attributed by Lehmann (1982) to a low oxidation state in the melt. However, Swanson and others (1988) emphasized that a given bulk melt composition that prevents formation of such tin-concentrating minerals as sphene, hornblende, and iron-titanium oxides effectively retains tin in residual melts during fractional crystallization. These conditions must prevail in less evolved melt fractions of granites in a tin system (for example, the porphyritic and seriate phases of Swanson and others, 1988). However, one can only surmise the presence of a less fractionated phase at depth because these granites are not exposed at Sleitat Mountain. Further, there is no evidence to indicate the presence of an associated plutonic complex at depth, so other explanations for the origin of topaz granites like Sleitat Mountain merit consideration.

Manning and Hill (1990) proposed a model in which refractory residues of previously generated biotite-granite magmas are partially melted in the lower crust to form a volatile-rich, specialized magma that then intrudes upper crustal rocks. This model eliminates the formation of "topaz-granite" magma as a generative process during magmatic differentiation but requires spatially associated magmatic rocks. Although the Sleitat Mountain stock could have intruded through a deeper batholithic complex, known geologic evidence does not support this association.

## CONCLUSION

The presence of a significant tin-mineralized granite in an area generally devoid of magmatic rocks invites speculation about the economic potential of the region. Sleitat Mountain stock is a multi-unit, highly differentiated, peraluminous, altered granite. This specialized granite has major- and trace-element characteristics that imply emplacement was followed by an alteration event that progressed and diminished in intensity from the core toward the margins of the stock. Granite alteration was presumably produced by a hydrothermal fluid that was fractionated from the magma. Extensive greisen alteration developed in the crystalline granite along an east-striking fracture system and overprinted the zonal alteration facies. From an economic standpoint, it is essential to recognize that mineralization and greisen alteration produced vertical, tabular greisen bodies plumbed by fluid channels now occupied by quartz-cassiterite veinlets. Mineralization may extend to significant depths below the drill-tested (91-m) mineralized horizons.

In the Kuskokwim Mountains and the Alaska Range, Wallace and Engebretson (1984) identified northeast-striking magmatic belts that bound a central area containing few intrusive rock units. Significant tin geochemical anomalies (King and others, 1985) and coincident aeromagnetic signatures (Case and Nelson, 1986) along the Mulchatna fault northeast of Sleitat Mountain indicate that other poorly or unexposed intrusive bodies exist in that area. This evidence and the presence of the tin-granite at Sleitat Mountain imply that there is a continuum between the magmatic belts of the Kuskokwim Mountains and Alaska Range. This intermediate region may be a viable target for other tin-mineralized systems like Sleitat Mountain. The particular geochemical characteristics of the Sleitat Mountain stock compare closely with other tin-producing granite complexes of the world.

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# NATIVE MERCURIAN-SILVER, SILVER, AND GOLD NUGGETS FROM HUNTER CREEK, ALASKA

By  
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## INTRODUCTION

Three silver-gray nuggets and a gold nugget recovered from placer-mining concentrates on Hunter Creek, Alaska, were submitted for identification to the authors by Steve Losonsky, longtime miner in the Rampart district, Alaska (fig. 1).

Figure 1. *Sketch map of northeastern corner of Tanana B-1 Quadrangle showing nugget collection locality on Hunter Creek.*

The analyzed nuggets were among several collected by Mr. Losonsky, along with other heavy minerals, including cinnabar, from the same placer concentrates.

## DESCRIPTIVE MINERALOGY

Three of the specimens (nuggets #1-3) have a dull-gray, metallic luster and the characteristic irregular form of well-travelled placer nuggets, including rounded and pitted surfaces (fig. 2). Initially, these three nuggets were

Figure 2. *Morphology of mercurian-silver nuggets #1 (left) and #2 (right) from Hunter Creek.*

thought to be native silver or platinum, but specific-gravity determinations were too low, and preliminary hardness tests indicated that the nuggets were softer and more malleable than either native silver or typical platinum-palladium alloys.

Because of their small size and scarcity, the specimens were chemically analyzed using nondestructive methods (microprobing and X-ray diffraction).

## MICROPROBE ANALYSES

### Surface Analyses

Exploratory probe analyses involved using an ARL Model SEMQ electron microprobe operated at 25 kV and 50 nA amp beam currents on unprepared nugget surfaces prior to the preparation of polished surfaces for more precise analyses. These exploratory analyses detected small irregular areas of gold-silver-mercury composition in a matrix of silver-mercury on the surfaces of nuggets #1 and #2 (fig. 3). Initially, raw assay data indicated the presence of moschellandsbergite (silver-mercury) in the matrix and irregular patches of weishanite (silver-gold-mercury). However, both minerals are crystalline, relatively brittle, and are characterized by well-defined cleavage, properties not present in analyzed phases in the nuggets.

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Table 1. Percent compositions of silver-mercury and silver nuggets based on electron microprobing

Element	Nugget #1	Nugget #2	Nugget #3
Ag	59.5	53.1	>90.0 <sup>a</sup>
Hg	38.2	45.4	0.2
Au	nd	nd	nd
Cu	0.1	0.2	nd
Fe	nd	nd	nd
Zn	0.2	0.2	nd
Sb	nd	0.1	nd
Te	nd	nd	nd
Pb	tr	nd	nd
As	nd	0.1	nd
Sn	0.1	nd	nd
Bi	nd	nd	nd
Se	nd	nd	nd
<b>Total</b>	<b>98.1</b>	<b>99.1</b>	<b>90.2</b>

<sup>a</sup>High percentage of silver masked all of these elements but mercury.  
nd = not detected

Figure 3. Sketch of photomicrograph of unpolished surface of nugget #1 showing irregular area of silver-gold-mercury (5 to 6 percent gold) surrounded by matrix of mercurian silver ranging in composition from  $Ag_{45}-Hg_{55}$  to  $Ag_{65}-Hg_{35}$ .

### Polished Surface Analyses

Electron-microprobe analyses of polished surfaces produced the data summarized in table 1. These data show that the matrices of nuggets #1 and #2 are composed of silver-mercury alloy, and that the gold-silver-mercury compositions are confined to small, irregular areas on unpolished surfaces of the nuggets (fig. 3). The evidence indicates that patchy concentrations of gold-silver-mercury surrounded by silver-mercury alloy may be the result of amalgamation of fine placer gold with silver-mercury on nugget surfaces in the fluvial environment.

In contrast, electron microprobing and X-ray diffraction demonstrate that nugget #3 is composed of native silver, and it has a mercury content of only 0.2 weight percent (table 1).

A gold nugget believed to be typical of coarse gold recovered from the placer gravels of Hunter Creek was analyzed for gold, silver, mercury, and copper to determine if native gold associated with cinnabar and mercurian silver in placer concentrates also carries a significant mercury content. Probe analyses indicate that the native gold has a fineness of about 0.850 and a low mercury content (0.11 weight percent) (table 2).

### Other Mineral Phases

Microprobing also identified accessory minerals. Nugget #1 contains many 20- to 70- $\mu$ m-diam inclusions of crystalline quartz, cinnabar (fig. 3), and inclusions of a

Table 2. Percent composition of gold nugget based on an electron microprobing

Element	Weight percent
Au	85.10
Ag	14.40
Hg	0.11
Cu	nd
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.61</b>

nd = not detected

silver-mercury sulfides similar in composition to imiterite (table 3). Nugget #2 contains grains of euhedral quartz, imiterite (table 3) (fig. 4), and less abundant acanthite. Nugget #3 has abundant inclusions of dyscrasite.

### COEXISTING MINERAL ASSEMBLAGES AND POSSIBLE SOURCE TERRANES

Thus, a unique assemblage of coexisting minerals is documented for the dull-gray nuggets in the Hunter Creek collection (table 4). These coexisting mineral phases and abundant cinnabar grains and pebbles in the placer concentrates present a convincing case for

Table 3. Percent compositions of mineral inclusions in mercury-silver nuggets based on electron microprobing

Element	Unidentified red mineral (nugget #1)	Imiterite (nugget #2)	
Ag	29.0	44.6	45.3
Hg	55.0	41.9	42.7
S	14.0	13.4	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>98.0</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>100.1</b>

a possible source terrane in the headwaters of Hunter Creek that contains silver-mercury- and silver-antimony-dominated epithermal mineral deposits. However, based on the relatively low mercury content of the analyzed gold nugget and the lack of detectable occult gold in the mercurian-silver nuggets, there is no direct evidence to indicate that placer gold in Hunter Creek was derived from an epithermal silver-mercury-dominated mineral deposit. Possibly the native silver nugget with dycrasite inclusions was derived from a supergene deposit that is unrelated to the silver-mercury system that produced the native silver-mercury alloys and the coexisting silver-mercury and silver-mercury-sulfur mineral phases.

## EPITHERMAL ANALOGUES AND MODELS

Table 4. Mineralogy of three mercurian-silver and silver nuggets from Hunter Creek.

Nugget	Mineral	Composition
#1	Mercurian silver	$\text{Ag}_{59}\text{Hg}_{38}$ <sup>a</sup>
	Imiterite	$\text{Ag}_2\text{HgS}_2$
	Cinnabar	$\text{HgS}$
	Quartz	$\text{SiO}_2$
#2	Mercurian silver	$\text{Ag}_{53}\text{Hg}_{45}$
	Imiterite	$\text{Ag}_2\text{HgS}_2$
	Acanthite	$\text{Ag}_2\text{S}$
	Quartz	$\text{SiO}_2$
#3	Native silver	Ag (trace Hg)
	Dycrasite	$\text{Ag}_3\text{Sb}$

<sup>a</sup>Silver-mercury ratios in weight percent (table 1).

Figure 4. Sketch of photomicrograph of polished surface of nugget #1 showing imiterite and quartz (Q) inclusions.

A search of the literature has not produced a recognized analogue for an epithermal mineral deposit that contains the silver-mercury-sulfur minerals and native alloys identified in the Hunter Creek nuggets and their included mineral phases; nor have we found any previous reference to native mercurian silver alloys in the compositional range defined by our analytical data.

The native-silver and dycrasite association identified in nugget #3 represents a bonanza-type silver assemblage as recognized in supergene deposits in the Chanarcillo deposit in Chile and elsewhere (Guilbert and Park, 1986), implying that the Hunter Creek nuggets are related to bonanza-type silver deposits. This possibility merits the attention of the Alaskan mining and exploration community.

## THE ENIGMA OF NATIVE MERCURIAN-SILVER ALLOYS

Although our literature search for previously described native mercurian-silver alloys in epithermal mineral deposits or placer concentrates, or both, was unsuccessful, we found some interesting documentation of man-made alloys in the compositional range of  $\text{Ag}_5\text{Hg}_8$  (Azaroff, 1960). According to Azaroff, this alloy is one of the "electron" or "Hume-Rothery" compounds in which the electron:atom ratio is 21:13 with structures very similar to the structure of brass. However, the silver-mercury compositions documented by our analytical data are apparently outside of the limited solubility range described by Azaroff, and we have been unable to find a silver-mercury temperature-composition diagram

that documents the parameters for permissible binary compositions in this system. Clearly, the structural state and metallurgical fabric of these native silver-mercury alloys should be analyzed in more detail, and the literature should be further screened for references to such alloys in man-made or natural states.

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Guilbert, J.M., and Park, Charles, Jr., 1986, The geology of ore deposits: New York, W.H. Freeman and Co., p. 829-830.



# LATE PLEISTOCENE VOLCANIC DEPOSITS NEAR THE VALLEY OF TEN THOUSAND SMOKES, KATMAI NATIONAL PARK, ALASKA

By

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most notable events in the volcanic history of the Alaska Peninsula was the 1912 ignimbrite-producing eruption at Novarupta and the accompanying collapse of the summit of Mt. Katmai. The eruption transformed the valley north of Katmai Pass into the steaming, pumice-covered wasteland now known as the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes (VTTS), which has been the focus of considerable scientific interest and research. Our studies of pre-1912 deposits there have yielded a richly detailed history of latest Quaternary glaciation and volcanism that has previously been largely overlooked. This paper examines one aspect of this history: the wide variety of deposits, including pyroclastic flows, lahars, lahar-runout flows, and fallout tephra as well as associated redeposited materials that were generated by a major volcanic eruption of late Wisconsin age in the Katmai area. Informally named Lethe tephra (Pinney and Begét, 1990), this group of deposits is an important marker horizon in the study area and has great potential for tephrochronology on the Kenai Peninsula.

## GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

The Windy Creek study area is located immediately west of VTTS on the northern Alaska Peninsula (fig. 1). The spine of the Alaska Peninsula is a series of volcanoes that generally hug the southern coast. Recently active peaks include Mts. Mageik, Trident, Katmai, and St. Augustine. Broad lowlands bordering Bristol Bay in the northern half of the peninsula are dominated by a series of large moraine-dammed lakes. Drainages in the Windy Creek area empty into Iliuk Arm of one such lake, Naknek Lake, via Ukak River and Margot Creek.

## LETHE TEPHRA

### Overview

Lethe tephra is composed of an extensive suite of dacitic deposits, including pyroclastic flows, lahars, lahar-

runout flows, and primary and reworked fallout tephra. These deposits are exposed in river gorges in VTTS as far as 1.5 km upvalley from the mouth of Windy Creek valley and extend about 5 km past Windy Creek in the hanging valley south of Three Forks Overlook (fig. 2). Fallout tephra near Homer on the Kenai Peninsula has been geochemically correlated with Lethe tephra. Fluvially reworked Lethe pumice has also been identified over 20 km away in latest Pleistocene delta deposits that appear to be graded to former Brooks Lake shorelines. Lethe deposits overlie Iliuk drift of late Wisconsin age in the Windy Creek area and are overlain by and incorporated into drifts of latest Wisconsin and earliest Holocene age (Pinney and Begét, in press). Organic silt immediately underlying these later drifts yields a younger limiting date of  $12,640 \pm 100$  yr B.P. (Beta-33666) for Lethe tephra (Pinney and Begét, in press), making it a potentially important latest Pleistocene marker horizon. The source of this tephra is presently unknown, but exposures of Lethe volcanoclastic deposits in deep streamcuts along River Lethe more than a kilometer south of the confluence of VTTS and Windy Creek valley indicate an origin at the head of VTTS, as does the lack of significant primary Lethe deposits in Windy Creek valley. Possible sources include Mt. Mageik and dacite domes surrounding Novarupta (for example, Mt. Cerberus and Falling Mountain).

Glass chemistry of Lethe tephra is very homogeneous throughout the wide variety of deposits. Table 1 summarizes results of extensive electron-microprobe analysis of Lethe glass, including a distal ash sample from near Homer. From 10 to 35 glass shards were analyzed in each sample, providing standard deviations of less than 0.50 for most sample oxides. Because of the high degree of similarity among all analyses, the mean composition given in table 1 can be considered representative of Lethe tephra as a whole. Figures 3 and 4 plot glass compositions of reference samples of Lethe tephra and samples of 1912 VTTS ashflow rhyolite, dacite, and andesite (Avery, unpublished data), illustrating significant chemical distinctions between these deposits. Figure 5 plots the mafic-phenocryst content of Lethe tephra and 1912 deposits. Lethe phenocryst assemblages overlap with VTTS dacite but are distinct from VTTS rhyolite and andesite, reflecting the dacitic composition of the Lethe material.

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Figure 1. *Location of Windy Creek study area relative to nearby features in Katmai area.*

### **Stratigraphy**

#### **LAHAR AND LAHAR-RUNOUT FLOW DEPOSITS**

Lahar and lahar-runout flowdeposits of Lethetephra are commonly associated and are volumetrically the

largest components of the suite exposed in the study area (fig.2). Lahar deposits consist predominantly of fairly well-rounded, buff-to-yellow, coarse, bedded pumice in a coarse sandy matrix. Beds are 1- to 3-m thick and are reversely graded in the lowest part of each flow unit. Scattered, prismatically-fractured pumice clasts and discoloration of pumice and surrounding sediments

indicate that these lahars were emplaced while still hot or contained hot clasts, as do rare sintered, glassy blocks associated with possible fumarolic activity.

The sandy matrix of these pumiceous lahars is virtually identical to sandy lahar-runout flow deposits with which they are usually interbedded. The coarse, yellow-brown lithic sands of these deposits approach thicknesses of 30 m in some stream cuts, where they form near-vertical, indurated cliffs. Their volcanic origin is confirmed by the character of the fine fraction, which is almost pure glass with chemistry indistinguishable from Lethe pumice (table 1). The lower 10 to 15 m of the thickest lahar-runout flow deposits are planar beds up to 2 m thick, and the upper 15 to 20 m have climb-

ing ripple beds 10- to 30-cm thick, which are typical of high-concentration flow deposits. Water-escape "dish" and "pillar" structures are locally very abundant and are present throughout many meters of section in some areas.

Large isolated clasts of sedimentary and volcanic lithologies up to 0.5 m in diameter are present in the sand, and a possible till rip-up clast was also identified. Smaller clasts are abundant and are usually distributed in chains or zones of concentration. Rare, gravel-filled channels are present near the base of the lahar-runout flowsands.

Overlying lahar-runout flow deposits in erosional contact (locally in channels) are 0.5- to 4-m-thick, waterlaid, crossbedded pumice and gravel. The presence of rare,

Table 1. *Glass compositions and mafic-phenocryst contents of reference Lethe tephra samples. Major oxides in glass separates given in normalized weight percent. Total Fe expressed as FeO\*. One standard deviation in weight percent given below each oxide concentration. Number of analyses per sample = n. Relative proportions of clinopyroxene, orthopyroxene, and amphibole expressed as cp/op/am. Descriptions of analyzed samples given in footnote. Also included are correlative stream-redeposited pumice lapilli from near Brooks Lake (BP), average glass composition of Lethe tephra from reference samples (LETHE MEAN), and correlative distal-ash sample from near Homer (89-H-2-1). Analytical methods after Begét and others (1991)*

Sample	n	Type	SiO <sub>2</sub>	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	Na <sub>2</sub> O	FeO*	CaO	K <sub>2</sub> O	MgO	TiO <sub>2</sub>	cp/op/am
WC9-X	18	a	72.13 0.50	13.75 0.22	4.12 0.19	3.27 0.20	2.52 0.16	2.41 0.07	0.67 0.07	0.61 0.03	29/61/2
WC15-A	10	a	71.64 0.21	14.05 0.18	4.19 0.14	3.16 0.11	2.74 0.08	2.35 0.06	0.76 0.05	0.54 0.04	21/74/5
WC15-E	13	a	72.00 0.46	13.93 0.18	4.16 0.24	3.03 0.24	2.65 0.21	2.40 0.08	0.73 0.07	0.65 0.07	19/74/7
WC15-Hd	11	a	71.65 0.30	13.99 0.11	4.27 0.10	3.17 0.20	2.65 0.13	2.40 0.06	0.77 0.05	0.61 0.04	27/71/2
WC15-Hl	10	a	71.81 0.23	13.95 0.11	4.22 0.08	3.19 0.13	2.57 0.11	2.39 0.07	0.75 0.03	0.67 0.07	23/68/9
WC16-X	16	b	72.05 0.49	13.76 0.15	4.34 0.15	3.18 0.19	2.50 0.13	2.35 0.10	0.68 0.05	0.62 0.06	22/78/0
WC34-X	21	c	72.54 0.62	13.82 0.19	4.04 0.16	2.93 0.28	2.47 0.15	2.46 0.07	0.68 0.06	0.61 0.06	32/55/13
WC36-SI	35	d	72.28 0.34	13.87 0.14	4.33 0.10	3.13 0.31	2.51 0.10	2.35 0.09	0.70 0.05	0.62 0.07	26/67/0
WC50-X	15	a	72.11 0.43	13.83 0.15	3.97 0.25	3.25 0.16	2.62 0.17	2.38 0.06	0.70 0.05	0.64 0.05	37/61/1
BP-1	15	e	72.12 0.35	13.96 0.17	4.15 0.13	2.99 0.21	2.65 0.15	2.33 0.05	0.71 0.07	0.61 0.05	19/81/0
BP-2	17	e	71.84 0.19	13.94 0.15	4.22 0.13	3.10 0.12	2.69 0.13	2.34 0.05	0.73 0.03	0.65 0.05	28/69/2
LETHE MEAN	11	-	72.02 0.27	13.90 0.10	4.18 0.11	3.13 0.12	2.60 0.09	2.38 0.04	0.72 0.03	0.62 0.03	—/—/—
89-H-2-1	16	f	72.37 0.30	13.88 0.13	4.31 0.14	3.07 0.13	2.56 0.09	2.34 0.06	0.70 0.04	0.62 0.05	—/—/—

Sample type: a=redeposited airfall blocks and lapilli  
 c=pumice lapilli dispersed in paleosol  
 e=fluvially redeposited pumice lapilli  
 b=lahar-runout flowdeposit, finefraction  
 d=welded pumice block  
 f=distal fineash

intact, breadcrust bombs in these deposits indicates that they were associated with volcanic activity that continued after emplacement of lahars and related deposits.

The surface of the valley fill composed of volcaniclastic deposits is largely buried by the 1912 ignimbrite, but exposures in banks along Windy Creek and River Lethe demonstrate that it is fairly flat and slopes gently northwest, indicating that the material was derived from upper VTTS. The Lethe-age surface is incised by at least

two abandoned channels of Windy Creek (fig. 2). A smaller, gravel-filled western channel may reflect stream diversion by glaciers during latest Pleistocene or earliest Holocene time, and the larger eastern channel was likely the course of Windy Creek immediately before the 1912 eruption.

The concept of lahar-runout flows is new, so we believe it is important to discuss deposition and characteristics of the flows and to present evidence in support

Figure 3. Glass compositions of reference samples of Lethe tephra and samples of 1912 VTTS ash flow (Avery, unpublished data) in plots of  $K_2O$  and  $FeO^*/Mg$  against  $SiO_2$ . Outlines around groups emphasize chemical distinctions.

Figure 4. *Ca-Fe-K plots of glass compositions of reference samples of Lethe tephra and samples of 1912 VTTS ash flow (Avery, unpublished data).*

of a lahar-runout flow origin for the thick sand sequences in lower Windy Creek. Definitive studies of lahars and their associated runout flows were accomplished by Scott (1988, 1989) on lahars of the recent eruption of Mt. St. Helens, as well as several of its older debris flows. Transformation of lahars into runout flows involves debulking through progressive incorporation of overrun stream flow. Hyperconcentrated stream flow, described by Scott (1988) as flow containing 40 to 80 percent sediment by weight or 20 to 60 percent by volume (400,000 to 800,000 ppm), results when increased water content causes a significant loss in yield strength. This change, which occurred in channel distances as great as 19 km at Mt. St. Helens, is thought to be facilitated by low clay content in the lahar and thus low cohesiveness, which allows greater miscibility with stream flow (Scott, 1988). When this transition threshold is reached, coarse clasts are deposited due to loss of yield strength, and fine silt and clay may be separated by drainage of interstitial water as the flow continues. Adding more water eventually dilutes lahar-runout flow to normal stream flow. Runout phases of some lahars at Mt. St. Helens were large enough to bury entire floodplains farther than 80 km from the volcano (Scott, 1988).

Lahar-runout flow deposits generated at Mt. St. Helens in 1980 and 1982 are generally massive to crudely stratified silt and 2- to 4-mm-diameter sand with particle- or clast-supported textures (Scott, 1988; 1989). Modal size

Figure 5. *Mafic-phenocryst contents of reference samples of Lethe tephra and samples of 1912 VTTS ash flow (Avery, unpublished data). Plot vertices are amphibole (amp), orthopyroxene (opx), and clinopyroxene (cpx).*

is in the sand range, commonly 0.2 to 2.0 phi (0.25-0.9 mm). This granularity is thought to reflect inclusion of sediments subject to previous sorting by explosive or hydraulic processes. Sorting is characteristically 1.1 to 1.6 phi, in a range intermediate between debris-flow deposits and most normal stream flow deposits (fig. 6). Clay content is low, commonly less than 3 percent.

Grain-size analysis was performed on samples of Lethe lahar-runout flow sediments for comparison with Mt. St. Helens deposits. Two samples of generally massive, particle-supported Lethe sands plot virtually the same and are in the range of lahar-runout flow deposits, although the curves are slightly steeper than Scott's curves (fig. 6). Sorting is on the order of 1.08 phi, and modal grain size, at 0.70 phi, is also well within the indicated range. Lethe clay contents of much less than 3 percent are typical of lahar-runout flow deposits.

Water-escape structures have not been reported at Mt. St. Helens but are in some Lethe deposits. Dish structures are very widespread, indicating that Lethe deposits were formed by water-saturated flows with high sediment concentrations. Pillars between upward-curving margins of dishes represent fluidization channels developed through permeable sediment. According to Lowe (1975), pillars of this kind (type A) are uncommon and irregularly spaced where dewatering occurred relatively slowly and tend to be common and regularly spaced where consolidation involved near-complete sediment

Figure 6. Cumulative curves of particle sizes in Lethe lahar-runout flows (LRF) plotted against curves for Mt. St. Helens (MSH) deposits, including lahar-runout flows, lahars, deposits from the lahar- to lahar-runout flow transition, and flood deposits. Lethe curve represents analyses of two samples that plot virtually identical and fall in the range of Mt. St. Helens LRF deposits. Mt. St. Helens data from Scott (1988).

liquefaction. With regard to clay-poor runout deposits, it is significant that these specific structures are found in loosely packed sand without the impermeable clays and silts generally required for most dewatering structures (Lowe, 1975). We suggest that water-escape structures developed at Windy Creek but not at Mt. St. Helens due to the much greater thickness of lahar-runout flow deposits in the Windy Creek area (up to 30 m compared with 2.5 m), which produced higher overburden pressures in pore fluids. These flows may also have interacted with water, snow, or ice during deposition because large glaciers may have existed in upper VTTS during the eruption.

### PYROCLASTIC-FLOW DEPOSITS

Pyroclastic-flow deposits are rare in Lethe valley-fill deposits but are locally preserved beyond the limits of the 1912 ignimbrite on moraines southwest of Three Forks Overlook (fig 2). These deposits provide important evidence that active volcanism accompanied deposition of

Lethe debris-flow deposits and was sufficiently vigorous to send primary pyroclastic flows many kilometers from their source. Lethe pyroclastic flows produced unwelded pumice-flow deposits that are composed of abundant pumice blocks and lapilli and less than 50 percent ash (as defined by Fischer and Schmincke, 1984). Exposures of several flows in a long gully cut across a moraine crest (fig. 7) display angular-to-subrounded, prismatically-fractured, buff dacitic pumice that is locally clast supported and openwork. A pumice-flow deposit up to 6 m thick, including several well-developed fossil fumaroles, extends more than 90 m to the mouth of the gully where it thins over an 8-m thickness of exposed late Wisconsin-age Illiuk till. In most places, beds of pyroclastic-flow pumice are topped by variable thicknesses of wind-reworked Lethe tephra and soil-forming silts. Pumice blocks and bombs locally exceed 60 cm in diameter. Flow units up to 5 m thick are normally graded. In one 3-m-thick exposure, 50 cm of 10- to 20-cm-diameter pumice at the top grades downward into more than 2.5 m of larger pumice and

bombs. Baked contacts are present locally.

The presence of Lethe pyroclastic-flow deposits beyond the limits of the 1912 ignimbrite indicates that Lethe flows were extremely mobile and may have had emplacement velocities greater than the VTTS flow (Begét and Limke, 1988). Lethe ignimbrites blanketing the Iliuk lateral moraine are about 1 km beyond the 1912 terminus. Based on the runup method (Begét and Limke, 1988), Lethe flows must have been travelling at least 12 m/s at this location to overtop the moraine. Actual velocity may have been greater, depending on the total relief of the moraine at the time of flow emplacement. Pyroclastic flow deposits at this location are approximately 20 to 25 m higher than the top of Lethe valley-fill deposits in lower

Windy Creek. Calculations using these criteria yield a minimum velocity of 19 to 22 m/s.

#### **PRIMARY AND REWORKED FALLOUT DEPOSITS**

Primary Lethe fallout pumice overlies deposits of Iliuk age and older in the Windy Creek area, where former surfaces were too gentle to allow much downslope washing, but most outcrops of Lethe tephra consist of reworked ash and lapilli. Buff pumice lapilli up to 2 cm in diameter are scattered on Iliuk moraines below Three Forks Overlook and lapilli about 1 cm in diameter are dispersed in a paleosol overlying Iliuk-age glaciolacustrine deposits in

Figure 7. Geologic cross section through Lethe tephra deposits exposed in natural gully west of lower Windy Creek. Volcaniclastic deposits override a lateral moraine of the late Wisconsin Iliuk glaciation.



Windy Creek valley. Thicknesses of crystal-rich sandy ash locally exceed 1.25 m on the floor of the hanging valley south of Three Forks Overlook, although these exceptional thicknesses are probably due in part to eolian deposition on leeward surfaces. Structures observed in Lethe ash deposits are analogous to structures in cross sections through dunes of 1912 tephra. We are uncertain how much of this ash can be attributed to airfall and how much was derived by eolian winnowing of pyroclastic flows and sandy lahar and lahar-runout flow deposits.

Fluvially reworked Lethe airfall pumice is widely distributed in the study area (fig. 2) and has been identified in delta deposits overlain by outwash at Brooks Lake. Concentration of slope wash material along the walls of Windy Creek valley has produced deposits of bedded pumice and sand that locally reach thicknesses of 6 m. Typical buff-to-yellow pumice clasts in a coarse sandy matrix are very well rounded and up to 15 cm in diameter. Rare brownish pumice clasts are locally dispersed among light-toned clasts. Bedding is planar to crossbedded, and bed thickness varies from 1 to 30 cm. Interbedded with pumice units are coarse sands and local fluvial gravels. The sand is typically composed of distinctive dark- and light-toned mineral grains, giving it a characteristic salt-and-pepper appearance. Small pebbles of Jurassic Nanknek Formation are common throughout reworked Lethe deposits in Windy Creek valley. Extensive reworking of Lethe pumice is also evident at the lip of the hanging valley overlooking Margot Creek drainage (fig. 2), where fine-grained, thin-bedded pumice and lapilli are exposed in sections thicker than 2 m.

## CONCLUSIONS

Excellent exposures in the Windy Creek area near the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes allow detailed study and description of proximal deposits of late-Pleistocene Lethe tephra. Stratigraphic relations between its various components and with significant glacial deposits provide evidence of its depositional environment and yield important chronological constraints on the latest Wisconsin and earliest Holocene glacial succession in the area. Lethe tephra is an important marker horizon in the study area and is known to extend to the Kenai Peninsula, where a correlative ashfall tephra is identified in the Homer area by geochemical comparison with proximal Lethe deposits. Distribution of Lethe tephra is likely to increase as more extensive tephra studies are conducted.

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# DEGLACIATION OF THE ALLISON-SAWMILL CREEKS AREA, SOUTHERN SHORE OF PORT VALDEZ, ALASKA

By  
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## INTRODUCTION

Signs of intense glaciation dominate a rugged landscape in the Port Valdez area. Jagged bedrock ridge crests separate deep, U-shaped valleys that once served as conduits for fast-flowing ice streams born in nearby alpine cirque basins under dynamic conditions of cool temperature, heavy snowfall, and rapid ablation. Faceted ridge spurs, steep ice-planed and fluted valley walls, and the deep fiord all attest to effective scouring and plucking of the layered bedrock by formerly thick ice tongues. Along the southern shore of Port Valdez in the vicinity of Allison and Sawmill Creeks, fresh moraines and striations on ice-molded bedrock document a late resurgence of glaciers from tributary valleys after retreat of the large trunk glacier that formerly occupied Port Valdez (fig. 1; Williams and Coulter, 1981, p. B78).

The freshness of these ubiquitous signs invites the curious to ask, "How long ago was the ice here?" The purpose of this report is to present geologic evidence in the Allison-Sawmill Creeks area that will partially answer this question.

## EVIDENCE IN THE ALLISON-SAWMILL CREEKS AREA

Intercalated metagraywacke and phyllitic argillite are dominant bedrock lithologies and greenstone is a minor bedrock component in the Allison-Sawmill Creeks area (Updike and Ulery, 1987). These foliated-to-massive rocks generally strike slightly north of east and dip steeply northward. Scouring by debris carried in the thick trunk glacier flowing down Port Valdez roughly parallel to rock layering differentially abraded this metamorphic sequence, leaving more competent metagraywacke units standing as streamlined (whaleback) ridges separated by deeply grooved, less competent layers of phyllitic argillite.

Silty gravel till deposited by the trunk glacier discontinuously covered the Allison-Sawmill Creeks area prior to construction of the marine terminal for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). End moraines of this age, if present, are inconspicuous.

In the vicinity of lower Allison Creek and lower

Sawmill Creek, irregular small moraines formed by ice emanating from these two tributary valleys cut across bedrock ridges and grooves carved during the last major glaciation of Port Valdez (fig. 1). Sets of at least two moraines are recognized in each of these drainages; the most extensive (earliest) moraines are clearly related to ice advances and are associated with numerous smaller, less extensive, and discontinuous recessional moraines. Major still-stands or significant retreats are probably represented by the younger set of end moraines 910 to 1,880 m south of Port Valdez.

Paired lateral moraines record a former ice advance down Allison Creek beyond the southern shore of Port Valdez (fig. 1; Williams and Coulter, 1981). East of Allison Creek, part of the east lateral moraine abuts a massive rock slide, known locally as the Liscum or Fort Liscum slide (Williams and Johnson, 1980; Combellick, 1987), but in the lower canyon of Allison Creek, this moraine trends out into a gap left when a later bedrock failure dropped part of the east valley wall from beneath the moraine (fig. 1). Surface morphology indicates that the Liscum slide resulted from at least three successive failures.

A pair of small but obvious lateral moraines delineates a resurgence that advanced down Sawmill Creek beyond the present southern shore of Port Valdez but probably did not override Saw Island or Jackson Point (fig. 1). This advance produced a small proglacial fan of sandy gravel up to 6 m thick that dammed the west side of a local drainage and produced Swan Lake. During May 1975, while the east tank farm was being constructed, Swan Lake was drained by cutting through the sediment dam and basin sediments were subsequently removed preparatory to emplacement of a foundation for the large oil-storage tanks. Before its removal, I was given the opportunity to document a geologic section through the eastern margin of the Swan Lake basin and to collect several organic samples for dating the section. These dates and the associated paludal, fluvial, lacustrine, and glacial deposits provide evidence for the timing of late-glacial events in the area (fig. 2).

The Swan Lake section was 90 m long and 3.3 to 12.7 m deep (fig. 2). The eastern 40 percent of the section was cut through the distal part of a small, local alluvial fan (figs. 1 and 2). The western 20 percent exposed sedi-

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Figure 1. *Location of Swan Lake section relative to nearby features in Allison-Sawmill Creeks area. Landforms mapped on 1:15,840-scale aerial photographs EEV-19-171 through 174, taken for U.S. Forest Service on June 13, 1959. Topographic features modified from U.S. Geological Survey Valdez A-7 (1960 with minor revisions 1970) Quadrangle and Valdez A-7SE (1983) Quadrangle maps, Alaska, to show conditions prior to extensive landscape alteration during construction of Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) marine terminal beginning in 1974.*



ments of the former lake, and the remaining 40 percent was cut through deposits beneath a lake-margin swamp.

A gently irregular, ice-scoured surface cut on phyllitic metagraywacke formed the base of the section, and between 1.2 and 5.5 m of medium-gray, compact, silty gravel till continuously covered the bedrock. At the top of the till was a discontinuous lag of subangular to subrounded cobbles and boulders. In the former lake basin, up to 0.3 m of sandy fluvial gravel, which overlay the cobble-boulder lag, was covered by as much as 3 m of laminated (varved) lacustrine silt and clay. Up to 0.8 m of silty organic lacustrine sand overlay the varved sediments and was overlain by up to 7 m of alluvial-fan gravel, organic sand, peat, and fill material. Sandy alluvial-fan gravel, heavily stained by iron oxides, had a maximum thickness of 1.8 m along the eastern edge of the section and thinned westward to 0.2 m. This granular deposit buried lenses and tongues of paludal fine-to medium-grained organic sand and fibrous peat and was in turn covered by similar paludal deposits (fig. 2). The upper peat had a maximum thickness of 1.8 m and was covered by up to 4.8 m of artificial fill.

Seven organic samples were collected from significant parts of the section and their radiocarbon ages were determined (fig. 2, table 1). Conventional radiocarbon dates of  $11,820 \pm 560$  yr B.P. (GX-10,789) and  $7,800 \pm 230$  yr B.P. (GX-10,788) for the bottom and top of the lake section, respectively, indicate that varved sediments accumulated in the basin from 12,000 to 8,000 radiocarbon y.a. Five concordant conventional radiocarbon dates document local paludal deposition between 9,700 and 6,100 radiocarbon y.a. and demonstrate that significant alluvial-fan aggradation began at the site about 6,100 radiocarbon y.a.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Deglaciation of Allison-Sawmill Creeks Area

The oldest radiocarbon date in the Swan Lake section (table 1) provides evidence that the Allison-Sawmill Creek area was free of glacial ice before 12,000 radiocarbon y.a. The cobble-boulder lag at the top of the till and beneath the lacustrine section indicates that a significant period of exposure and subaerial erosion or nondeposition affected the till blanket after retreat of the trunk glacier and before formation of Swan Lake. Thus, the major period of deglaciation probably occurred several centuries or millennia before 12,000 radiocarbon y.a.

Physiographic and stratigraphic relations indicate that outwash derived from the glacier that readvanced out of the upper valley of Sawmill Creek blocked the mouth of a shallow, westward-sloping trough between the steep bedrock slope south of the TAPS terminal and a prominent ice-scoured bedrock ridge to form the Swan Lake basin (fig. 1). The date of  $11,820 \pm 560$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (GX-10,789) for twigs, moss, and organic silt in basal lake deposits demonstrates that this blockage was produced by a glacial advance close to 12,000 radiocarbon y.a. (table 1).

Brief observations of weathering profiles developed on oldest lateral moraines of local derivation in the Allison-Sawmill Creeks area indicate that they bear well-developed spodosolic soils with eluvial (E) layers 7 to 12 cm thick and that maximum depths to the base of weathered till range from 0.9 to 1.5 m. Degree of soil development is equal for moraines in both drainages, indicating that advances were simultaneous.

Although Lethcoe (1987, p. 124) assigned the oldest

Table 1. Summary of radiocarbon dates for geologic cross section exposed 5-17-75 in artificial cut through eastern margin of former Swan Lake basin, Allison-Sawmill Creeks area, keyed to figure 2.

Sample	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (yr B.P.)	Laboratory sample number
a	Twigs, moss, and organic silt	$11,820 \pm 560$	GX-10,789
b	Peat and organic silt	$9,660 \pm 290$	GX-10,787
c	Wood	$9,240 \pm 275$	GX-11,329
d	Wood	$7,800 \pm 230$	GX-10,788
e	Organic silt	$6,340 \pm 270$	GX-11,332
f	Woody peat and organic silt	$6,285 \pm 245$	GX-11,330
g	Wood	$6,065 \pm 130$	GX-11,331

east lateral moraine and associated recessional moraines in the Allison Creek drainage to a Neoglacial advance, they clearly predate the Holocene. This latest Wisconsin advance was coeval with an expansion of Finger Glacier in the eastern Lituya district shortly after 12,400 radiocarbon y.a. (Mann, 1986). Comparison with the late Quaternary chronology for the upper Cook Inlet region indicates that moraines in the Allison-Sawmill Creeks area correlate with the Elmendorf moraine in the Anchorage area. The Elmendorf moraine is dated younger than  $13,690 \pm 400$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (W-2151) and older than  $11,690 \pm 300$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (W-2375) (Schmoll and others, 1972) and represents the Tanya (last) stage of the Naptowne glaciation (Schmoll and Yehle, 1983, 1986; Schmoll and others, 1984). Therefore, the oldest moraines of local derivation in the Allison-Sawmill Creeks area represent the end of late Wisconsin glaciation in the Port Valdez area, and upvalley moraines that record the next younger advance or significant still-stand in these valleys are almost certainly Holocene in age (fig. 1).

### **Relation Between Local Glaciation and Liscum Slide**

Spatial relations between Liscum slide and the east lateral moraine of the Allison Creek drainage are evidence for a temporal relationship between local glacial events and that massive rock failure. The main body of the slide (rock slides 1 and 2 in fig. 1) was apparently emplaced prior to the 12,000-radiocarbon-yr readvance out of Allison Creek canyon because the undisturbed east lateral moraine fills a large indentation in the slide at the southeastern corner of the TAPS terminal. The first stage of rock sliding was probably caused by loss of support after retreat of the trunk glacier that undercut but also buttressed the steep rock wall south of Port Valdez. Subsequent failures may have been triggered by strong earthquakes. These failures were facilitated by the well-developed, planar foliation, which dips steeply northward (Updike and Ulery, 1987).

The third, smaller failure of the steep western rock wall at the head of the slide probably occurred after the 12,000-radiocarbon-yr advance because the east lateral moraine in the canyon of Allison Creek trends into space occupied by the rock wall before it dropped onto the upper part of rock slide 2 (fig. 1). The jagged rocky ridge crest in this area indicates that glacial ice did not flow through the gap. However, available evidence does not rule out collapse of the rock wall from beneath the glacier at a time when glacier thickness and activity did not permit significant ice flow into the gap.

### **Deglaciation of Port Valdez**

Based on the results of a sparker survey of the sediment fill in Port Valdez and estimating a yearly sediment influx between  $34 \times 10^9$  and  $65 \times 10^9$  metric tons, von Huene and others (1967) concluded that Port Valdez was deglaciated between 3,900 and 9,800 y.a. with a mean of 7,000 y.a. Williams and Coulter (1981) reported a conventional radiocarbon date of  $9,520 \pm 350$  yr B.P. (W-1654) for a freshwater-peat sample recovered from an interval between 15.9 and 16.2 m below sea level in a borehole through the eastern margin of Mineral Creek fan on the northern shore of Port Valdez. In the borehole, this peat is present above a 13.8-m-thick unit of interbedded till and marine silt and gravel deposited during the late Wisconsin glaciation. Therefore, their 9,520-radiocarbon-yr date represents a minimum date for deglaciation of Port Valdez.

Clearly, the trunk glacier formerly occupying Port Valdez was gone before 12,000 radiocarbon y.a. In fact, many areas that were glaciated in late Wisconsin time in southcentral Alaska were free of ice well before this time (table 2). Comparison with the Cook Inlet trough, where more evidence is preserved, indicates that the major deglaciation of Port Valdez coincided with the waning phase of the Skilak stage of the Naptowne glaciation (Karlstrom, 1964). Unpublished work by my colleagues and me demonstrates that the Skilak stage dates between 14,000 and 16,000 y.a. Therefore, Port Valdez was probably initially cleared of glacial ice about 14,000 y.a.

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Table 2. *Summary of radiocarbon dates associated with late-Wisconsin deglaciation in southcentral Alaska*

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Area	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (yr B.P.)	Laboratory sample number	Source	Comment
Turnagain Arm, upper Cook Inlet	Mollusk shells	13,900 ± 400	W-2919	Schmoll and Yehle (1983, 1986) Bartsch-Winkler and Schmoll (1984)	Shells incorporated into till of Elmendorf-age readvance
Point Woronzof, Upper Cook Inlet	Mollusk shells	14,900 ± 350	W-2367	Schmoll and others (1972)	Shells from upper macrofossil-rich zone of Bootlegger Cove Formation
Lower Beluga River, west shore Upper Cook Inlet	Shells	14,350 ± 200	W-4292	Schmoll and Yehle (1983, 1986)	Shells from silt-clay zone of Bootlegger Cove Formation
Hidden Lake, western Kenai Mountains	Organic sediment	13,730 ± 110	W-4827	Rymer and Sims (1982) Ager and Sims (1982) Ager (1983)	Sample from depth of 2.5-2.6 m in 3.3-m, bottom-sediment core (younger limiting date)
Upper Matanuska Valley, northern Chugach Mountains	Peaty silt	13,100 ± 60	USGS-2175	Williams (1986)	Basal 2 cm of 3-m-thick pond deposit overlying till (younger limiting date)
Tiekel bog, central Chugach Mountains	Silty peat	13,900 ± 400	I-3796	Sirkin and Tuthill (1987)	Sample from depth of 6.45 to 6.5 m in 6.65-m core (younger limiting date)
Katalla valley, southern Chugach Mountains	Marine clay	14,430 ± 890	I-3082	Sirkin and Tuthill (1972)	Sample from depth of 4.25 to 4.5 m in 4.75-m core



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# DATING HOLOCENE MORAINES OF CANWELL GLACIER, DELTA RIVER VALLEY, CENTRAL ALASKA RANGE

By

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## INTRODUCTION

Canwell Glacier is a 24-km-long valley glacier that terminates just east of Richardson Highway in Delta River valley of the central Alaska Range (fig. 1) (Denton, 1975). Attempts during the past 39 yr to establish ages of the two Holocene moraines of Canwell Glacier have yielded inconsistent results, which are partially resolved by new radiocarbon evidence. The purposes of this report are to document and discuss evidence of the ages of these moraines.

## SETTING

The study area is in the middle Delta River valley near Mile 215, Richardson Highway, about 40 km north-northwest of Paxson and about 23 km north of Isabel Pass. The valley floor, at 2,500 ft (758 m) elevation, is about 3,000 ft (909 m) below surrounding glacier-modified peaks. Canwell Glacier is the southernmost of three valley glaciers, including Fels and Castner Glaciers, that approach Richardson Highway from the east (fig. 1).

Canwell Glacier flows west-northwest down the ice-scoured, linear trench of the lengthy Denali fault system (Péwé and Reger, 1983, 1989). Upper and Lower Miller Creeks are glacial-meltwater streams that drain short distances west and northwest, respectively, from Canwell Glacier into Delta River, which is extensively braided in this reach. The terminus of Canwell Glacier at 2,650 ft (803 m) elevation consists of extensive ice-cored ablation moraine, indicating that near-terminus ice is stagnant (Mendenhall, 1900).

More extensive former positions of Canwell Glacier are documented by two Holocene moraines (fig. 1). The older, outer moraine is discontinuous, has low relief, and apparently contains no ice core. Above treeline along the southern side of Canwell Glacier, a well-preserved, tundra-covered till ridge represents a lateral moraine of the older Holocene advance (Reger, 1964; Reger and Péwé, 1969). A small remnant of the equivalent terminal moraine is preserved near the highway bridge over Up-

per Miller Creek. This short till ridge is forested by old spruce and bears a continuous, mossy ground cover up to 0.3 m thick. The younger, inner moraine of Canwell Glacier is continuous, fresh looking, and stands in relief as high as 4.6 m. It is composed of unweathered rock debris and contains an extensive ice core, especially at higher elevations. The gravelly morainal surface supports scattered spruce and aspen trees, willow shrubs, and a thin, discontinuous ground turf.

Based on a study of 1:63,360-scale infrared aerial photographs (ALK 60 CIR, negatives 3895-3896) taken August 24, 1981, modern altitudinal limit of spruce trees in the vicinity of the terminus of Canwell Glacier is close to 2,750 ft (833 m) elevation, about 250 ft (76 m) above the floor of Delta River valley. Other treeline species include aspen and balsam poplar.

## EVIDENCE OF MORAINAL AGES

Dendrochronologic, lichenometric, and radiocarbon methods have been used to date moraines of Canwell Glacier. Initial tree-ring counts supplemented by one radiocarbon date were later tested by lichenometric dating, yielding controversial results (Reger, 1964; Péwé, 1965; Reger and Péwé, 1969; Péwé and Reger, 1983, 1989). Radiocarbon samples recently collected and analyzed aid interpretation of previous results.

### Older Holocene Moraine

In 1951, in the western terminal zone of Canwell Glacier, Péwé counted as many as 165 annual growth rings in stumps of sound, first-generation spruce trees that were cut an estimated 10 to 15 yr earlier and estimated ages of rotten-centered spruce trees as old as 250 yr (fig. 2) (Péwé, 1957). In 1952, he collected a 15-cm-diameter spruce log from beneath what he interpreted to be till of the older Holocene advance and obtained a radiocarbon age of less than 200 yr B.P. (W-268) for this wood (Rubin and Suess, 1956) (fig. 2 and table 1, sample A). However, Rubin (written commun., 1964) stressed that the wood could also be older than 200 yr, and a piece of the same log was later dated at  $310 \pm 75$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (GX-10982) (fig. 2 and table 1, sample E). To allow for significant variation in atmospheric-radiocarbon content during Holocene time (Stuiver and others, 1991),

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Figure 1. *Geologic map showing radiocarbon sampling sites associated with Holocene moraines of Canwell Glacier relative to Richardson Highway and trans-Alaska pipeline route (TAPS). Base is 1:63,360-scale infrared aerial photograph ALK 60, negative 3895, taken August 24, 1981.*

Figure 2. Exploded composite projection showing relations of Holocene features in terminal area of Canwell Glacier to tree-ring, lichen, and radiocarbon ages, keyed to table 1. Vegetation shown diagrammatically.

these conventional radiocarbon ages were calibrated to tree-ring ages ranging from modern (table 1, sample A) to as old as 482 yr B.P. (table 1, sample E). Because sample A was analyzed at a time when test results were less reliable than now, we believe that sample E, which has a mean calibrated age of 316 to 421 yr B.P., better represents the age of the wood collected by Péwé.

The dense vegetation cover on the remnant of the older terminal moraine is not favorable for lichenometry. However, Reger (1964) measured largest thalli of the crustose lichen *Rhizocarpon geographicum* (s.l.) above treeline on the equivalent south lateral moraine of Canwell Glacier. There, among a sample population of the 75 largest plants at eight stations, maximum diameters ranged from 132 to 161 mm, and maximum diameters (between stations) averaged 144 mm. Reger's initial growth curve for *R. geographicum* (s.l.) was based on dendrochronological ages of the Holocene moraines of Black Rapids and Canwell Glaciers and was very different from the growth curve for this species developed in the St. Elias Mountains by Denton and Karlén (1973, 1977). Recent, as yet unpublished results by Ten Brink and his associates along the northern flank of the Alaska Range

essentially duplicate the Denton-Karlén curve (Péwé and Reger, 1983). Assuming that the Denton-Karlén curve is a reasonably accurate growth curve for *R. geographicum* (s.l.) in Delta River valley, the single largest lichen measured on the older south lateral moraine of Canwell Glacier (161 mm) indicates that at least 3,640 yr have passed since moraine stabilization; based on the average maximum diameter among the population surveyed (144 mm), the south lateral moraine of Canwell Glacier is at least 3,330 yr old.

### Younger Holocene Moraine

In 1951, Péwé counted up to 102 annual growth rings in the largest spruce trees growing on the younger terminal moraine of Canwell Glacier (Reger and Péwé, 1969). In 1961, Reger (1964) measured diameters of largest *R. geographicum* (s.l.) above treeline on the equivalent south lateral moraine. Among the 74 largest individuals at eight stations along the crest of the moraine, diameters varied from 28 to 50 mm and maximum diameters (between stations) averaged 34 mm. At six stations on the coeval terminal moraine, where trees and shrubs promote an

Table 1. Summary of radiocarbon dates associated with Holocene features in terminal area of Canwell Glacier, keyed to figure 2. All samples but W-268 corrected for natural isotopic fractionation based on carbon-13 content. Calibration to calendar years B.P. based on changes in radiocarbon contents of dendrochronologically dated tree rings (Stuiver, 1982; Stuiver and Pearson, 1986; Stuiver and Reimer, 1986)

Sample	Materials dated	Radiocarbon age (yr B.P.)	Calibrated age (yr B.P.) 1 min. (cal. mean age) 1 max.	Laboratory number	Source
A	Spruce wood	200 ±	0* (0*, 1, 162, 166, 285) 289	W-268	Péwé (1957), Péwé and Reger (1983)
B	Spruce wood	200 ± 75	0* (0*, 1, 162, 166, 285) 307	GX-10983	This study
C	Spruce wood	200 ± 75	0* (0*, 1, 162, 166, 285) 307	GX-14441	This study
D	Bark, leaves, and disseminated organics	225 ± 90	0* (293) 423	GX-15535	This study
E	Same as sample A	310 ± 75	296 (316, 394, 421) 482	GX-10982	This study
F	Organics in compressed paleosol A horizon	675 ± 130	540 (667) 730	GX-14440	This study
G	Same as sample F	905 ± 90	728 (795, 813, 820, 871, 877) 946	GX-15534	This study

0\* = negative calibrated age B.P. (post-1950).

irregular, spotty lichen cover and lichen dating is less reliable, 13 of the largest thalli varied from 18 to 33 mm in diameter and averaged 26 mm. Assuming that the largest single lichen measured on the south lateral moraine above treeline (50 mm) most accurately reflects the minimum age of the younger Holocene moraine, it is

about 550 yr old (fig. 2) (Péwé and Reger, 1983). Based on the Denton-Karlén growth curve for *R. geographicum* (s.l.), the average maximum thalli diameter on the moraine above treeline (34 mm) indicates that the moraine is at least 230 yr old. An 8-cm-diameter spruce log collected by Péwé in 1952 from beneath what he interpreted to be

till of the younger Holocene moraine was later dated at  $200 \pm 75$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (GX-10983) (fig. 2 and table 1, sample B). The mean calibrated age of wood sample B ranges from modern to 285 yr B.P., and the sample may be as old as 307 calibrated yr B.P. (table 1).

Recent excavations by Reger in the north bank of upper Miller Creek, where it cuts through this moraine, uncovered two buried, thin organic layers overlying till of the younger Holocene advance. Well-preserved leaves, delicate twigs, and moss in these layers indicate that both layers were buried by colluvial diamicton derived from nearby till. The upper organic layer was covered by 1.5 m of gravelly colluvium and was separated from the lower organic layer by 1.2 m of gravelly colluvium. Both layers dipped north about  $35^\circ$  (fig. 2). The upper layer, which was about 2 mm thick where exposed beneath a large (0.4- by 1.1-m) boulder, dated  $225 \pm 90$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (GX-15535) (fig. 2 and table 1, sample D). Sample D has a mean calibrated age of 293 yr B.P., but it could date from modern to 423 calibrated yr B.P. (table 1). The 2- to 15-mm-thick, lower organic layer capped a 14-cm-thick B horizon that was light olive brown (2.5Y5/4); the underlying unweathered gravelly till was olive gray (5Y5/2). Two dates were obtained for the lower organic layer:  $675 \pm 130$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (GX-14440) and  $905 \pm 90$  radiocarbon yr B.P. (GX-15534) (fig. 2 and table 1, samples F and G). When calibrated separately, samples F and G have mean ages ranging from 667 to 877 yr B.P. (table 1). The calibrated weighted average of both samples is 735 yr B.P., which is a minimum date for the older Holocene moraine.

## IMPLICATIONS

Data on the ages of Holocene moraines of Canwell Glacier provide insights into problems applying dendrochronology, lichenometry, and radiocarbon-dating techniques in this near-alpine area. Spruce trees growing on younger and older Holocene terminal moraines are obviously much younger than the surfaces they inhabit. Factors possibly contributing to this age difference include: (1) severity of near-alpine conditions of cool summer temperatures, strong winds, and slowly melting glacial-ice cores in moraines; (2) shifting treeline; (3) severe insect infestations; and (4) repeated wildfires

(Péwé and Reger, 1983, 1989). Comparison of the results of different techniques for dating the younger Holocene moraine of Canwell Glacier demonstrates that an age estimate based on the maximum size of the largest lichens growing on this moraine more closely approximates its actual age than the ages of trees growing on it. However, lichenometric ages still represent minimum values because lichen colonization and early growth are slow, and several decades may pass before a uniform rate of diameter increase is sustained (Reger and Péwé, 1969). Radiocarbon dates require special care in their interpretation. Initial assumptions that spruce trees buried by gravelly diamicton are components of forest beds overridden by two Holocene advances of Canwell Glacier were erroneous. Clearly, these samples were buried by younger colluvium derived from local tills (fig. 2, samples A, B, and E). Heartwood of a dead but otherwise unmodified mature spruce tree lying on the modern floodplain of Upper Miller Creek (fig. 2 and table 1, sample C) produced the same radiocarbon age as wood supposedly overridden by the younger Holocene glacial advance. Also, modern trees growing along the tops of eroding, steep, floodplain-marginal banks of till are soon toppled by undercutting and quickly inundated by debris flows.

In the northwestern terminal zone of Canwell Glacier, the older Holocene moraine joins coeval terminal moraines of Fels and Castner Glaciers (fig. 1). Morainal distribution indicates that these three glaciers formed a compound terminal ice mass that may have blocked Delta River, at least temporarily, during the Neoglacial ice expansion that has been documented elsewhere in the Alaska Range (Ten Brink, 1983; Calkin, 1988). Morainal distribution indicates that Canwell and Fels Glaciers joined again during the younger Holocene advance but remained separate from Castner Glacier.

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# GILEAD SANDSTONE, NORTHEASTERN BROOKS RANGE, ALASKA: AN ALBIAN TO CENOMANIAN MARINE CLASTIC SUCCESSION

By  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Gilead sandstone (an informal name used in this report) of Albian to Cenomanian age is a succession of sandstone, siltstone, and lesser shale that crops out in the Gilead Creek-Ivishak River area along the Shaviovik front of the northeastern Brooks Range in the Sagavanirktok A-2 Quadrangle, northeastern Alaska (fig.1). A detailed geologic map (Pessel and others, in prep.) and two measured sections (930 m and 254 m thick) indicate that the rocks are part of a faulted, broad, southwest-plunging syncline that probably is in thrust-fault relation with the underlying Kingak Shale of Jurassic and Cretaceous age (fig.2). Previously, the Gilead sandstone was mapped as the lower member of the Ignek Formation (Keller and others, 1961).

Age of the Gilead sandstone is early Cenomanian to early late Cenomanian and Albian (W.P. Elder, written commun., 1990), and it correlates with the Nanushuk Group of Albian to Cenomanian age. This correlation extends to the northeast the known distribution of rocks of late Albian and early Cenomanian age in northeastern Alaska.

This paper presents detailed paleontologic, lithologic, and field data on this little understood and poorly defined belt of rocks.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES AND STRATIGRAPHIC NOMENCLATURE

Leffingwell (1919) originally defined the Ignek Formation as "2,500 ft of black shales with coal or 'red beds' and subordinate sandstone members that probably overlies the Kingak Shale and occurs at both ends and along the northern front of the Sadlerochit Mountains." Payne and others (1951) mapped these rocks as the Nanushuk and Colville Groups. Gryc and Mangus (1947) and Keller and others (1961) included both Lower and Upper Cretaceous beds in the Ignek Formation. Keller and others (1961) redefined Leffingwell's Ignek Formation to include strata that unconformably overlie the Okpikruak and Kingak Formations and underlie the Sagavanirktok Formation from the Ivishak River to the Canning River and eastward.

Figure 1. *Location of measured sections of Gilead sandstone.*

They divided the Ignek Formation into lower and upper members and designated the succession of sandstone and shale at Gilead Creek as part of the "Igne Formation, lower member." Keller and others (1961) mapped the Gilead Creek area and made the Gilead sandstone the lower member of the Ignek Formation. Their section 8 was measured at the same locality as section 89RR20 of this report, but it extended southeast down the valley of Kashivi Creek to the contact with rocks they mapped as Okpikruak Formation. No fossils were reported in their measured section.

Detterman and others (1975) abandoned the term Ignek Formation because some Ignek rocks closely resemble formations and members of the Nanushuk and Colville Groups in the Umiat area of the east-central North Slope. They suggested that the Nanushuk and Colville Groups be extended into northeastern Alaska.

## LITHOLOGY AND STRATIGRAPHY

The Gilead sandstone is characteristically organized into a number of distinctive upward-coarsening cycles that are 39 to 100 m thick. The well-exposed, 254-m-long

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measured section (90RR16) along the Ivishak River comprises eight coarsening-upward cycles. The discontinuously exposed, 930-m-long measured section (89RR20) between Gilead Creek and Kashivi Creek comprises at

least eight coarsening-upward cycles (fig.3). The internal organization of these 50- to 120-m-thick cycles typically consists of a basal, 1- to 1.5-m-thick shale overlain by an upward-coarsening succession of thin, parallel-bedded

Figure 2. *Generalized geologic map of Gilead sandstone in the Gilead-Kashivi Creek area showing location of measured section 89RR20.*

silty shale, siltstone, and very fine-grained sandstone, which is locally ripple laminated. Grain size and bedding thickness increase up-section and sedimentary structures include parallel and ripple lamination, crossbedding, trough crossbedding (0.5- to 1.5-m wavelength and 0.1- to 0.3-m amplitude), hummocky cross-stratification, and minor graded bedding (Bouma Ta, Tab, Tabc, Tac, and Tbc).

The uppermost part of the typical cycle consists of medium- to thick-bedded, medium- and coarse-grained sandstone. Typically, Gilead sandstone beds are medium bedded (1 to 20 cm), nonchannelized, or structureless; thick-bedded units (>50 cm thick) of apparently featureless, medium- and coarse-grained sandstone are also common. Load and flute casts are locally common. Locally, 3- to 5-m-wide channels and climbing ripples are present.

The sandstone is typically medium- to dark-gray, fine- to coarse-grained, subangular, moderately sorted litharenite, which weathers dark gray and orange-brown. Petrographic estimates of framework grains are: 50 percent quartz, 30 percent chert, 10 percent metamorphic-rock fragments, 2 percent plagioclase feldspar, 2 percent limonitic-weathered clasts, 1 percent white mica, and (locally) 3 percent carbonaceous material. Matrix and cement (<10 percent of the rock) are primarily clay, iron oxide, and locally carbonate. Porosity and permeability are estimated to be low in most of the sandstone. Siltstone is a minor component in the unit (<5 percent) and is gradational between the top of sandstone beds and overlying shale horizons. Very dark-gray-to-black shale beds are typically <5 cm thick and locally contain carbonaceous plant fragments and carbonaceous material. The sandstone-to-shale ratio is >10:1.

### Measured Sections

The base of section 89RR20 is at 69°10'23" N., 147°43'03" W., and the top of the section is at 69°09'41" N., 147°48'05" W. in the Sagavanirktok A-2 Quadrangle (fig. 2). The base of this section, which is rubble covered, is probably in thrust-fault contact with the underlying Kingak Shale (fig. 3; Pessel and others, in prep.). The section traverse extends southwest from the base to the 1,825 ft (553 m) elevation, where the section is offset 1.6 km west (center of sec. 21, T. 3 S., R. 18 E., Umiat Meridian) to a ridge at 1,905 ft (880 m) elevation. From that point the section was measured to the southwest (fig. 2). This offset in the measured section is due to the presence of a north-striking thrust fault. Evidence for this structural discontinuity includes abundant tectonic indicators and apparent duplication of the upper part of the section to the west. Bedding in the faulted syncline

Figure 3. *Generalized stratigraphic section (89RR20) of the Gilead sandstone; P = progradation, T = transgression.*

in the Gilead Creek area typically strikes east and dips from 10° to 30° south.

Measured section 90RR16 is 254 m thick and is located at approximately the 1,000-ft (300-m) elevation along the western bank of Ivishak River. The base of section 90RR16 is at 69°06'00" N., 148°02'00" W., and the top of the section is at 69°06'20" N., 148°02'20" W. in the Sagavanirktok A-2 Quadrangle (fig. 1). Bedding in this section typically strikes east and dips from 45° to 85° south. This rivercut provides the best exposures of sedimentary structures, lithologic cycles, and postdepositional tectonic structures in the area. Stratigraphic relation between these two measured sections is unknown because there are no distinctive marker beds.

The Gilead sandstone is predominantly medium- to coarse-grained litharenite with lesser siltstone and shale. Coarser grained sandstone is most abundant and is locally

gradational into finergrained sandstones. Siltstone is a minor component (<5 percent) but may be more abundant in rubble- and vegetation-covered intervals. Siltstone is gradational between the top of sandstone beds and the overlying thin shale horizons. Shale (typically <5 cm thick in outcrop) is very dark gray to black and locally contains carbonaceous plant fragments and coal. The sandstone-to-shale ratio is >10:1. Sandstone forms resistant outcrop ridges in the Gilead Creek area, whereas shale-rich sequences underlie recessive-weathering, rubble- and vegetation-covered slopes. Consequently, sandstone appears to be the dominant rock type in outcrop. These ribs of sandstone define the broad, faulted syncline in the Gilead Creek area.

### Petrography

The Gilead sandstone is typically a dark-gray-to-medium-gray-, dark-gray-, and orange-brown-weathering, fine- to coarse-grained, subangular, moderately sorted litharenite. Petrographic estimates on framework grains are: 50 percent quartz, 30 percent chert, 10 percent metamorphic-rock fragments, 2 percent plagioclase feldspar, 2 percent limonitic-weathered clasts, 1 percent white mica, and (locally) 3 percent carbonaceous material.

Matrix and cement in this litharenite consist of ≤10 percent clay and iron oxide, however carbonate cement may locally constitute 10 percent of the rock, where it is preferentially concentrated in broad, trough-crossbedded zones. In one carbonate-rich thin section, chert grains are replaced by microcrystalline carbonate. Porosity and permeability in sandstone are estimated to be low, based on examination of hand specimens and epoxy-filled thin sections.

### Kingak Shale

Kingak Shale of Jurassic to Neocomian age underlies Gilead sandstone in apparent thrust-fault contact (fig. 2). Quartz crystals up to 1.5 cm long in open fractures, abundant slickensides, tectonized shale and brecciation at several localities at the top of the Kingak Shale are evidence of faulting there.

Kingak Shale consists of black (unweathered) and orange-brown-weathered, soft clay-shale exposed only locally as rubble crop. Concretions up to 15 cm in diameter are abundant in float. Iron-stained, very fine-grained sandstone float also is present locally. No megafossils were found in the Kingak Shale during this study. A black-shale sample from the top of the Kingak Shale yielded a single poorly preserved specimen of *Pareodinia ceratophora* of probable Jurassic age (Bujak and Davies,

written commun., 1989). Two additional pollen samples from the Kingak Shale in the Gilead Creek area yield Jurassic and possible Bathonian (Middle Jurassic) ages. Thermal-alteration indices (TAI) in the six samples of Kingak Shale range from 3+ to 4- (table 2).

### SEDIMENTOLOGY

Within the Gilead sandstone, groups of individual beds separate naturally into packages that coarsen and thicken up section. These packages range in thickness from 30 m to as much as 100 m (fig. 3). Sandstone beds are typically non-channelized and appear structureless. Good exposures exhibit parallel bedding, ripple laminations, crossbedding, and trough cross-stratification. Trough cross-stratifications pinch and swell; they range in thickness from 20 to 50 cm with individual beds ranging in thickness from 1 to 3 cm. Wavy lamination (possible upper flow regime), hummocky cross-stratification, climbing ripples, and graded bedding are present locally; load and groove casts are locally abundant. Climbing ripples are present in fine to coarse sandstone and typically vary in thickness from 3 to 4 cm, although they are locally as thick as 20 cm. Groove casts are locally eroded into lower beds. Sandstone beds with erosional bases are rare and typically consist of medium- and coarse-grained sandstone cut into fine- and very fine-grained sandstone. Zones of carbonate-cemented, medium- and coarse-grained sandstone are present in trough-cross-stratified beds. Carbonate cement is preferentially concentrated in these broadly crossbedded zones and is probably a secondary feature controlled by original textural changes along laminae.

Sandstone layers are typically medium bedded and 1 to 20 cm thick. However, resistant thick-bedded (>50-cm) units of featureless, medium and coarse sandstone are also common. Interbeds range from fine and very fine sandstone to siltstone and, locally, to shale. The transition from coarser to fine-grained beds is gradational. In some exposures, 3- to 30-cm-thick beds grade from basal very coarse-grained, carbonaceous sand, upward to medium and fine sand, and, ultimately, to silt and shale.

### PALEONTOLOGY

#### Megafossils

Megafossil analysis by W.P. Elder (written commun., 1990) indicates an early Cenomanian to early late Cenomanian age for the Gilead sandstone. One definitive *Inoceramus dunveganensis* McLearn was collected from the top of section 89RR20 (table 1, sample 89IM17). This

inoceramid is characteristic of the Ninuluk Formation of Cenomanian age on the North Slope. Another inoceramid was collected stratigraphically above the Gilead sandstone on Gilead Creek and is probably a member of the *Mytiloides labiatus* (Schlotheim) group; it indicates an early Turonian age (table 1, sample 89AMu29-2). Numerous inoceramid specimens belonging to this group are present in the U.S. Geological Survey collections from the Seabee Formation of Cenomanian to Turonian age (W.P. Elder, written commun., 1990). These Turonian-age rocks crop out along Gilead Creek north of the Gilead sandstone. The contact relation between Turonian units at that locality and Gilead sandstone is uncertain, but similar lithology, clast types, and structures are evidence for a conformable contact or a minor unconformity.

### Micropaleontology

Palynology analysis by the Bujak Davies Group of Calgary, Alberta, Canada (written commun., 1989) and analysis of foraminifera and pollen by Micropaleo Consultants, Inc. (written commun., 1990) provide age assignments of Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous, probable Early Cretaceous, possible Early Cretaceous to possible Albian, and Barremian to Albian for Gilead sandstone in the Sagavanirktok A-1 Quadrangle (table 1).

### DEPOSITIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Sedimentologic features indicate that internally structureless sandstones are the result of amalgamation or dewatering rather than bioturbation. Local channel morphology supports the amalgamation interpretation. The absence of completely preserved Bouma sequences and local climbing ripples indicates reworking of the upper part of individual sand deposits. Amalgamated beds develop where the top of a sand bed is eroded and another sand bed is deposited without an intervening shale; the break in sedimentation may be difficult to detect.

The depositional environment of the Gilead sandstone was a middle shelf that was dominated by storm currents. Water depth in this environment may be as much as 200 m (Komar and others, 1972). Based on the presence of bedding-plane-parallel laminations, crossbedding, trough crossbedding, local graded bedding, shale rip-ups, and possible current reworking of the upper bed forms, the environment of deposition was dominated by single-event processes, like storm currents, and turbidity currents. Storm-related processes typically produce these structures in shelf deposits (Swift and Niedoroda, 1985). Storm-surge ebb flow transport sediment seaward across these

shelves during storm events and deposit them as graded sand beds (Hayes, 1969). Subsequent storm-wave-base processes reworked, eroded, and added to these graded deposits. Locally, graded bedding with 1- to 5 cm-thick Bouma sequences, flute casts, possible amalgamation of sandstone beds, and shale rip-ups are evidence for deposition by turbidity currents. Molenaar and others (1984) suggested that rocks in their stratigraphic section in the Gilead syncline were produced by deep-water turbidity currents.

Distinctive climbing ripples and possibly hummocky cross-stratification are present in the Gilead sandstone, the former indicating super-saturated flow. Climbing ripples and trough cross-stratification are commonly attributed to shallow-water environments rather than classic turbidites.

### THERMAL-ALTERATION INDEX AND VITRINITE REFLECTANCE

Ten Gilead sandstone samples provided TAI values ranging from 2 to 3, and eight Kingak Shale samples yielded values ranging from 3 to 4- (table 2). Vitrinite reflectance ( $R_o$ ) for nine samples ranges from 2.32 at the base of the section to 1.03 at the top of the section;  $R_o$  values for three samples of the underlying Kingak Shale ranged from 1.43 to 2.12 (Reifenstuhl, 1990). The vitrinite-reflectance gradient is approximately 1.2  $R_o$  units per 3,500 ft (1,060 m), similar to the values for the Tunalik 1 well on the North Slope. In the Tunalik 1 well, vitrinite-reflectance and TAI values range from 0.61 and 3.2 at 3,300 ft to 5.2 and 5+ at 19,400 ft (5,880 m) respectively (U.S. Geological Survey, 1979). These vitrinite reflectance values yield a gradient of approximately 1  $R_o$  unit per 3,500 ft (1,060 m). Thus,  $R_o$  values and the gradient from the Gilead sandstone are consistent with other subsurface Upper and Lower Cretaceous deposits of the North Slope.

### REGIONAL CORRELATION

Cenomanian megafossils at the top of the Gilead sandstone are evidence that it correlates with the Ninuluk and Chandler Formations of the Nanushuk Group. This correlation is based primarily on the early Cenomanian to early late Cenomanian age of *Inoceramus dunveganensis* McLearn (table 1, sample 89IM17). Stratigraphically above the Gilead sandstone, the inoceramid *Mytiloides labiatus* (Schlotheim) group of early Turonian age correlates with the Seabee Formation of Cenomanian to Turonian age.

Table 1. *Paleontology of Gilead sandstone (Kgs), Kingak Shale (KJk), and Upper Cretaceous (Ku) samples*

Sample	Rock unit	Latitude (N) and longitude (W)	Age determination and comments
*90IM17	Kgs	69°09'41" 147°48'05"	Early Cenomanian to early late Cenomanian: <i>Inoceramus dunveganensis</i> McLearn; characteristic of Ninuluk Formation Top of measured section 89RR20
*90AMU29-2	Ku	69°13'45" 147°59'10"	Early Turonian: <i>Mytiloides labiatus</i> (Schlotheim) group Nearly identical to <i>inoceramids</i> from Seabee Formation Gilead Creek, latitude 69°13'50"N
89RR20-2722	Kgs	69°09'40" 147°48'06"	#Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous; nonmarine to paralic Top of measured section 89RR20
89MR3A	Kgs	69°12'40" 147°55'20"	#Jurassic to Cretaceous
89MR8C	Kgs	69°09'30" 147°46'10"	#Probable Early Cretaceous; nonmarine to paralic Base of Kgs measured section 89RR20
89MR13C	Kgs?	69°13'40" 147°58'55"	#Barremian to Albian; marginal marine Uppermost? Kgs along Gilead Creek Above fault contact with the KJk on Kishivi Creek
NS79C	Kgs	69°06'05" 148°01'05"	#Jurassic-Early Cretaceous; nonmarine to paralic *Indeterminate; probably nonmarine West side of Ivashak River; in measured section 90RR16
90RR26	Kgs	69°07'05" 148°04'40"	*Possible Early Cretaceous; probably marginal marine *Possible Early Cretaceous, possible Albian; marine (Foraminifera analysis); west bank Ivashak River, 285 m elevation
90TJR013	Kgs	69°07'55" 148°05'20"	*Cretaceous; possible Early Cretaceous; marginal marine West bank Ivashak River, 280 m elevation
89MR16C	KJk	69°11'40" 147°36'55"	#Jurassic; nonmarine to paralic *Probably Jurassic-early Neocomian; nonmarine
89MR16D	KJk	69°11'40" 147°36'55"	#Jurassic to Early Cretaceous; nonmarine to paralic *Probably Jurassic-early Neocomian; marginal marine
89MR16E	KJk	69°11'40" 147°36'55"	#Bajocian (Middle Jurassic), <i>Wallodinium elongatum</i> Zone; nonmarine to paralic *Probably Jurassic-early Neocomian; nonmarine
89RR19A	KJk	69°10'34" 147°42'47"	#Probably Jurassic; paralic to marginally marine *Probably Late Jurassic Base of Kgs measured section 89RR20
89PE34	KJk	69°11'40" 147°43'05"	#Possible Bathonian (Middle Jurassic); paralic *Probable Late Jurassic Below fault contact with Kgs
90RR7A	KJk	69°09'05" 147°46'10"	#Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous (Oxfordian-Valanginian) Foraminifera analysis; marine

\*Analyses by Micropaleo Consultants, Inc., Encinitas, California, May and July 1990

#Analyses by Bujak Davies Group, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, September 1989

†Analyses by W. Elder, U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, California, December 1990

Table 2. Vitrinite reflectance( $R_o$ ) and thermal-alteration indices (TAI) for Gilead sandstone (Kgs) and Kingak Shale (KJk)samples

Sample	Rock unit	$R_o$ mean	$R_o$ range	Number of readings	TAI	Latitude (N) and longitude (W)
+89RR20-285	Kgs	2.18	1.98-2.37	35	—	69°10'21" 147°42'55"
*89RR20-285	Kgs	1.34	1.07-1.61	11	—	69°10'21" 147°42'55"
+89RR20-500	Kgs	2.25	2.06-2.43	23	—	69°10'16" 147°42'55"
*89RR20-500	Kgs	1.30	1.09-1.56	6	—	69°10'16" 147°42'55"
+89RR20-1826	Kgs	1.75	1.52-1.97	55	—	69°10'04" 147°47'06"
*89RR20-1826	Kgs	1.25	1.08-1.48	26	—	69°10'04" 147°47'06"
+89RR20-2722	Kgs	1.03	0.86-1.19	13	—	69°09'40" 147°48'06"
*89RR20-2722	Kgs	1.26	1.03-1.55	21	—	69°09'40" 147°48'06"
+89RR009	Kgs	2.33	2.17-2.51	15	—	69°10'00" 147°43'50"
+89RR70A	Kgs	2.32	2.20-2.54	35	—	69°09'25" 147°46'10"
+89RR20-820	Kgs	2.12	1.81-2.35	9	—	69°10'11" 147°42'59"
*89MR16B	KJk	2.12	1.83-2.69	24	—	69°11'45" 147°36'39"
+89RR19A	KJk	1.43	1.18-1.60	4	—	69°10'34" 147°42'47"
89MR16C	KJk	—	—	—	3+	69°11'40" 147°36'55"
89MR16D	KJk	—	—	—	4-	69°11'40" 147°36'55"
89MR16E	KJk	—	—	—	3	69°11'40" 147°36'55"
89RR19A	KJk	—	—	—	3+	69°10'34" 147°42'47"
89PE34	KJk	—	—	—	3+	69°11'40" 147°43'05"
89IM37	KJk	—	—	—	3-	69°09'10" 147°47'00"
89IM38	KJk	—	—	—	4-	69°09'00" 147°46'25"
89RR20-2722	Kgs	—	—	—	2	69°09'40" 147°48'06"
89MR3A	Kgs	—	—	—	2+	69°12'40" 147°55'20"
89MR8C	Kgs	—	—	—	3	69°09'30" 147°46'10"
89MR13C	Kgs?	—	—	—	2	69°13'40" 147°58'55"
NS79C	Kgs	—	—	—	3	69°06'05" 148°01'05"
89RR20-500	Kgs	—	—	—	3-	69°10'16" 147°42'55"
89RR20-1826	Kgs	—	—	—	3-	69°10'04" 147°47'06"
89RR70A	Kgs	—	—	—	3-(?)	69°09'25" 147°46'10"
89MR2C	Kgs	—	—	—	2+	69°12'45" 147°54'50"
89IM36	Kgs	—	—	—	3-	69°12'40" 147°46'30"

TAI analyses by Bujak Davies Group, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, September 1989

+Measurements by U.S. Geological Survey, Denver Federal Center Laboratory, Denver, Colorado, September 1990.

\*Measurements by: Dr. Alan Cook, Keiraville Consultants, Australia, December 1989

My mapping did not establish the amount of offset along the thrust fault between the Gilead sandstone and the underlying Kingak Shale, but the Gilead sandstone is faulted northward. Faulting has obscured original stratigraphic and age relations. Based on biostratigraphic evidence, I suggest that there is a significant Aptian hiatus. Whether this loss of rock record is a function of an unconformity of Aptian age or removal of part of the section by thrust faulting is unknown.

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# KIKIKTAT MOUNTAIN KLIPPE: A LINK BETWEEN THE COPTER PEAK AND NUKA RIDGE ALLOCHTHONS, NORTHCENTRAL BROOKS RANGE, ALASKA

By

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## INTRODUCTION

Kikiktat Mountain, a prominent 4,126-ft (1,250-m) peak, is located at the northern front of the central Brooks Range, about 10 km west of Killik River in the Killik River 1:250,000 Quadrangle (fig. 1). A small tributary of Imnaitchiak Creek separates Kikiktat Mountain from a smaller peak to the west, which is informally known as West Kikiktat Mountain; this pair of mountains constitutes the Kikiktat Mountain klippe.

The geology of Kikiktat Mountain was briefly described by Chapman and others (1964). No subsequent published geologic description of the mountain is known prior to this detailed study, which was done during June and July 1985. The stratigraphy and generalized structure

of part of the Killik River Quadrangle were discussed by Mull and others (1987); a regional geologic map of the quadrangle is in preparation by Mull and others.

We subdivide Kikiktat Mountain into three geologic units: (1) upper basalt and chert, (2) arkosic sandstone and shale, and (3) lower basalt and chert. The uppermost 500 m are composed of basalt with discontinuous chert layers. This unit overlies the 30-m-thick arkosic-sandstone and shale unit, which is structurally underlain by a thinner, lower basalt and chert unit. These three units form the Kikiktat Mountain klippe, which structurally overlies sedimentary rocks of the northern Brooks Range (Mull and others, 1987).

In this paper we correlate the upper basalt and chert unit with basalt of the Copter Peak allochthon and correlate the arkosic-sandstone and shale unit with Nuka Formation in the Nuka Ridge allochthon (Mayfield and others, 1988). We tentatively correlate the lower basalt

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Figure 1. Map showing location of Kikiktat Mountain in the Killik River Quadrangle, Brooks Range, northern Alaska. Black areas are allochthonous basalt or gabbro and ultramafic rocks, gray area is Nuka Formation at Nuka Ridge. SM = Siniktanneyak Mountain, MM = Misheguk Mountain, CP = Copter Peak, AH = Avan Hills, NR = Nuka Ridge (modified from Mull, 1989, sheet 1).

unit with maficigneous rocks of the Ipnarik sequence in the Ipnarik allochthon (Mayfield and others, 1988). At Kikiktat Mountain, the contact between the upper basalt unit and the sedimentary unit looks depositional, leading us to suggest a stratigraphic link between the Copter Peak and Nuka Ridge allochthons, which previously were considered to be disparate thrust sheets.

## REGIONAL SETTING

The central and western Brooks Range is composed of sedimentary and igneous rocks that comprise seven major allochthons that contain numerous thrust sheets (Mayfield and others, 1988). The uppermost allochthon consists mostly of ultramafic rocks and cumulate gabbro; it overlies an allochthon that consists dominantly of basalt and minor chert (Tailleur, 1970; Martin, 1970). These two upper allochthons were obducted over dominantly sedimentary rocks a minimum of 120 km from south to north during Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous time (Roeder and Mull, 1978). The stacking of ultramafic and gabbroic rocks over basalt is preserved in a number of separate klippen in the western Brooks Range (Mull, 1982) and is characteristic of these rocks throughout the Brooks Range. In some localities in the western and central Brooks Range, only basalt sheets are preserved as isolated klippen; Kikiktat Mountain in the foothills of the Endicott Mountains is the easternmost well-exposed igneous klippe in the central Brooks Range (fig. 1).

The gabbro-dunite allochthon in the De Long Mountains of the western Brooks Range was named the Misheguk Mountain allochthon by Mayfield and others (1988), and erosional remnants of a basalt allochthon in the Avan Hills and at Siniktanneyak Mountain, Misheguk Mountain, Copter Peak, and other localities (fig. 1) (Zimmerman and Soustek, 1979; Nelson and others, 1979; Boak and others, 1987) were grouped into their Copter Peak allochthon. Collectively, the Misheguk Mountain and Copter Peak allochthons of oceanic or ophiolitic affinity (U.S. Geological Survey, 1973; Patton and others, 1977; Roeder and Mull, 1978) and the Christian complex in the eastern Brooks Range are considered part of the Angayucham terrane (Jones and others, 1981). The dominantly sedimentary rocks of the underlying allochthons have been assigned to the continental Arctic Alaska terrane (Jones and others, 1981).

In the western Brooks Range, the uppermost sedimentary allochthon in the Arctic Alaska terrane is the Nuka Ridge allochthon, which contains a distinctive arkosic limestone and sandstone unit termed the Nuka Formation (Tailleur and Sable, 1963; Tailleur and others, 1973; Mayfield and others, 1988). At Nuka Ridge, the type locality of the Nuka Formation in the De Long

Mountains, the formation is overlain by Pennsylvanian to Triassic chert and siliceous shale of the Etivluk Group and by Cretaceous graywacke. However, in most localities in the De Long Mountains, the Nuka Formation is overlain by basalt of the Copter Peak allochthon. In most places the boundary between the Copter igneous sequence and the Nuka Formation is not exposed, although Inyo Ellersieck (written commun., 1991) reports two exposures where the contact is a fault or detachment zone. Elsewhere, the contact is assumed to be a thrust fault by most workers because of the marked contrast between rocks of oceanic and continental affinity (Mayfield and others, 1988; Mull, 1985).

## STRATIGRAPHY

### UPPER BASALT INTERVAL

From a distance, the upper basalt unit on Kikiktat Mountain looks crudely stratified, the result of alternating resistant and less resistant layers (fig. 2). Although they lack well-defined tops and bottoms and are extensively fractured, resistant intervals can be interpreted as individual flows up to a few meters thick. The crude stratification defines a regional east-trending syncline with an axis through the peaks of Kikiktat Mountain. Dips on the flanks of the syncline range up to about 20°. Although fault planes are not exposed, local bedding convergence of about 10° can be interpreted to result from thrust imbrication where north-vergent thrust faults crosscut flows and climb from one layer to another.

Well-developed pillow-basalt structures are present on Kikiktat Mountain but are not common. A generally inaccessible layer of columnar basalt can be traced for several hundred meters high on the canyon wall on the southeastern side of West Kikiktat Mountain. This columnar basalt is about 15 m thick and is nearly horizontal, but the columns consistently lean about 15° N.

The upper basalt is dark green, weathers reddish brown, and is unfoliated and blocky. No coarse-grained gabbro or ultramafic rocks were observed. Milky, bluish-green siliceous amygdules 1 to 2 mm in diameter are most abundant near chert horizons. Secondary minerals in fractures and veins include calcite, clear euhedral quartz crystals up to 2 cm long, and pale-green prehnite crystals in aggregates 1 to 2 cm thick.

Chert horizons up to 2 m thick are interlayered in the basalt. The chert is typically black to gray, but greenish-gray, bluish-gray, maroon, and turquoise-blue cherts are also present. Weathering surfaces are generally white. Chert horizons can be traced for up to 50 m, although they are commonly broken by deformation. Locally interlayered with chert are maroon, black, and green

Figure 2. *Generalized geologic map of Kikiktat Mountain. Sample locations of Late Mississippian to Early Pennsylvanian radiolarians (Alexander, 1990).*

shaly layers with feldspar crystals and lithic fragments that may be remnants of tuffaceous layers.

The upper basalt looks as if it depositionally overlies the Nuka Formation, although I.L. Tailleux (written commun., 1991) interprets these units to be in intrusive contact. This contact is well exposed in at least two localities, where it is a knife-edge contact along which there is no visible evidence of structural movement (fig. 3). A layer of very fine-grained, dark, homogeneous basalt within 1 cm of the contact represents an altered chill zone.

## Nuka Formation

A 30-m-thick section of the Nuka Formation (fig. 4) underlies the upper basalt of Kikiktat Mountain and is well exposed in two steep-sided canyons west of the crest of Kikiktat Mountain. The best exposure crops out in Duttweiler Canyon (fig. 2), where the upper meter of Nuka Formation consists of gray-to-black, silicified mudstone or chert with a baked (apparently depositional) contact with the overlying basalt (fig. 3).

The Nuka Formation there consists of distinctive beds of arkosic limestone, limy arkosic sandstone, and interbedded shale. In general, the section has a coarsening-upward character in which sandstone and arkosic limestone beds are thickest and most numerous near the top; the base of the section consists dominantly of shale. Although the Nuka Formation is relatively nonresistant, it can be observed around nearly the entire periphery of Kikiktat Mountain and West Kikiktat Mountain.

Individual limestone and arkose beds in the Nuka Formation are medium gray, weather brownish gray, range up to 1.5 m thick, and have many features characteristic of turbidite deposition. Beds are typically graded and contain Bouma Ta-Td sequences; some beds are amalgamated. Beds contain planar and rippled cross-laminations, starved ripples, local convolute bedding, and burrows. Quartz and unweathered feldspar grains predominate, range from subangular to rounded, and vary from fine grained to as large as 8 mm. Rounded-to-subangular black-shale clasts up to 3 cm in diameter are common in some beds; large megaflores with amplitudes up to 15 cm are present at the base of one bed. Brachiopods and other unidentified shell material are present locally in outcrop and rubble. Some beds contain abundant unidentifiable plant fragments. Shale interbeds in the upper Nuka section are gray and contain thinly laminated sandstone beds. Near the base of the section, the shale is black, very fissile, and phyllitic, with scattered, rounded, reddish-brown-weathering limestone nodules. The Nuka Formation is deformed by small-scale kink folding in the interlayered shales, by slip along bedding planes, and by later normal faults. Deformation apparently increases toward the lower part of the unit.

## Lower Basalt Interval

The Nuka Formation is underlain by a basalt-and-chert interval about 30 to 50 m thick, which is similar to the upper basalt of Kikiktat Mountain but consists of only a few basalt layers and has well-developed slickensides between many layers. At one locality on West Kikiktat mountain, dark-green conglomerate and sandstone with clasts of black-and-blue chert are apparently interlayered

Figure 3. Photograph of unfaulted contact between top of Nuka Formation and overlying basalt in Duttweiler Canyon, southwestern side of Kikiktat Mountain. Tip of handheld hammer at contact.

Figure 4. *Stratigraphic section of Nuka Formation, Kikiktat Mountain, measured in Duttweiler Canyon. Scale in meters.*

with the basalt. These rocks are similar to nearby Cretaceous conglomerate and are interpreted to be a fault sliver in the basalt.

The top of the lower basalt unit is marked by intense shearing and brecciation; this deformation, combined with increased deformation toward the base of the Nuka Formation, indicates that the Nuka Formation-lower basalt contact is a thrust fault. The base of the lower basalt unit is not exposed but apparently is a thrust fault because it overlies the Cretaceous conglomerate and other rocks of the sedimentary allochthons. This lowermost fault forms the base of the Kikiktat klippe.

## PETROGRAPHY AND ANALYTICAL DATA

### BASALT

Modal composition of the basalt is uniform throughout Kikiktat Mountain with no appreciable difference between upper and lower basalt intervals. The basalts consist primarily of plagioclase, clinopyroxene, opaque oxides, and secondary minerals. Green micaceous alteration minerals (celadonite?) and titanite, some in euhedral forms, may be pseudomorphs of primary orthopyroxene or olivine. Other alteration minerals include iron oxide, chlorite, biotite, calcite, sericite, epidote, and opaque minerals. The degree of alteration varies; freshest samples have <1 percent secondary minerals, and the least fresh samples are nearly all altered. No glass is recognizable in thin section. Point counts of six thin sections (400 points each) yield average modal percentages of about 53 percent plagioclase (predominantly labradorite), 36 percent augite, 6 percent opaque minerals (including magnetite, ilmenite(?), and pyrrhotite), and 5 percent pseudomorphs. The basalt is aphanitic to fine grained; some samples have phenocrysts of clinopyroxene or plagioclase, or both, up to about 5 mm. Foliation is absent; textures are generally intersertal.

Major-oxide analyses of nine representative basalts from Kikiktat Mountain are shown in table 1 with accompanying CIPW norm calculations for each sample. Four samples are quartz normative; none are nepheline normative. According to the Yoder and Tilley (1962) classification, the samples are tholeiites and olivine tholeiites. A variation diagram plotting  $\text{Na}_2\text{O} + \text{K}_2\text{O}$  versus  $\text{SiO}_2$  shows a spread in alkalis over a small range in  $\text{SiO}_2$  (fig. 5). Applying the Macdonald and Katsura (1964) classification, the samples span the tholeiite to alkali basalt fields. On an AFM diagram (fig. 6), the samples have a high proportion of iron typical of the tholeiitic suite.

However, the possibility of alkali mobility in these basalts cannot be discounted because of minor alteration of all basalts examined.

### Nuka Formation

Thin sections of sandstone from the Nuka Formation contain grains of quartz, alkali feldspar, plagioclase, opaque oxides, up to 45 percent carbonate, and trace amounts of zircon  $\pm$  biotite  $\pm$  white mica  $\pm$  chlorite  $\pm$  titanite and hematite. Alkali-feldspar grains include subrounded microcline and perthite up to 3 mm diameter. Quartz is highly strained, and there is extensive subgrain development and recrystallization of some grains. Plagioclase is present in variable amounts and tends to be smaller than alkali-feldspar grains. Metamorphic foliation is not evident. Most sandstone layers contain invertebrate fossil fragments, including foraminifera, bryozoa, brachiopods, trilobites, ostracods, and pelmatozoan debris. Micritic filling bryozoa fragments indicates that at least some of these fossils have been reworked.

### AGE

Limited faunal data constrain the age of the rock units on Kikiktat Mountain to the late Paleozoic Era. Radiolarians have been recovered from cherts interbedded with the upper basalt at four locations on Kikiktat Mountain. T.E. Moore (written commun., 1987, *in* Alexander, 1990) reported a Late Mississippian to Early Pennsylvanian age for a sample collected near the top of Kikiktat Mountain. K.M. Reed and B.L. Murchey (written commun., 1986 and 1987, *in* Alexander, 1990) reported Late Mississippian to Early Pennsylvanian radiolarians from one of three chert samples in the upper basalt unit (fig. 2).

Conodonts from a probable float sample of the Nuka Formation collected by I.L. Tailleux in Duttweiler Canyon about 15 m below the basalt are dated as Late Meramecian to Early Chesterian (middle Late Mississippian) by Anita Harris (U.S. Geological Survey). Megafossils collected from the Nuka Formation at Kikiktat Mountain and another nearby locality yielded conflicting age interpretations. Corals from an isolated outcrop of typical Nuka arkosic limestone on Imnaitchiak Creek 12 km northwest of Kikiktat Mountain are dated by W.J. Sando (written commun., 1984) as Mississippian-Pennsylvanian and no younger than Desmoinesian (Middle Pennsylvanian). Brachiopods of uncertain identification from two localities in the Nuka Formation at Kikiktat Mountain and corals from another locality on Imnaitchiak Creek to the north are considered to be Permian (J.T. Dutro, Jr., written commun., 1984). However, paleontological data

Table 1. *Major-oxide geochemical analyses and CIPW norms of Kikiktat Mountain basalt samples\**

Sample	DNS105a	DNS107a	DNS119e	DNS122b	DNS123	DNS126d	DNS142	DNS151f	DNS161	DNS166a	DNS166b
<b>Major oxide analyses (weight percent)</b>											
SiO <sub>2</sub>	48.38	48.32	48.45	49.77	48.90	48.97	48.96	50.29	48.52	49.32	49.02
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	14.84	14.32	14.13	12.83	13.26	14.48	14.49	14.74	13.70	14.33	13.76
Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> *	13.62	13.56	12.52	15.02	12.29	11.15	12.71	11.99	12.57	13.78	13.47
MgO	6.08	6.61	7.80	5.36	7.74	8.35	6.71	6.93	6.62	7.11	6.87
CaO	10.93	9.76	9.29	10.19	10.84	10.69	10.29	9.15	13.11	7.17	9.72
Na <sub>2</sub> O	2.47	3.26	3.61	2.52	3.01	2.37	3.04	3.53	1.97	4.36	3.53
K <sub>2</sub> O	0.19	0.38	0.14	0.24	0.25	0.15	0.19	0.67	0.06	0.17	0.33
TiO <sub>2</sub>	1.97	1.74	1.44	2.27	1.61	1.62	1.81	1.46	1.62	1.68	1.95
P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	0.18	0.16	0.12	0.21	0.13	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.17
MnO	0.23	0.23	0.20	0.24	0.20	0.16	0.22	0.25	0.20	0.23	0.24
LOI	1.46	1.74	2.53	1.67	2.13	2.16	1.55	1.47	1.70	1.99	1.36
Total	100.35	100.06	100.23	100.32	100.35	100.21	100.13	100.61	100.20	100.27	100.41
<b>CIPW norms (weight percent)</b>											
quartz	1.52	0.00	0.00	5.20	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	2.14	0.00	0.00
orthoclase	1.15	2.31	0.85	1.45	1.52	0.91	1.15	4.03	0.36	1.03	1.99
albite	21.35	28.35	31.57	21.86	26.17	20.62	26.35	30.40	17.08	37.94	30.46
anorthite	29.47	23.96	22.68	23.57	22.54	29.22	25.94	22.80	29.07	19.57	21.13
diopside	20.25	20.24	19.65	22.15	25.84	19.65	20.63	18.36	29.97	13.15	21.94
hypersthene	16.87	9.17	5.56	15.24	10.52	20.47	16.08	10.42	13.28	7.16	7.96
olivine	0.00	7.37	12.17	0.00	5.33	0.00	1.06	6.50	0.00	12.80	7.24
magnetite	5.14	4.83	4.41	5.61	4.63	4.65	4.92	4.37	4.64	4.74	5.10
ilmenite	3.82	3.40	2.83	4.42	3.14	3.16	3.52	2.82	3.15	3.28	3.78
apatite	0.43	0.38	0.29	0.50	0.31	0.31	0.36	0.31	0.31	0.33	0.40
Total	100.00	100.01	100.01	100.00	100.00	99.99	100.01	100.01	100.00	100.00	100.00

\*Samples from upper basalt, except DNS126 and DNS142, which are from lower basalt interval. Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>\* = total iron as Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>; LOI = loss on ignition. Iron apportioned for norm calculation according to Irvine and Baragar (1971) such that Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> = TiO<sub>2</sub> + 1.5 with remainder being FeO. Analyses by Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys laboratory using X-ray fluorescence methods.

Figure 6. *AFM diagram plotting alkalis ( $\text{Na}_2\text{O} + \text{K}_2\text{O}$ ), iron (total iron as  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ) and magnesium ( $\text{MgO}$ ) in selected central Brooks Range basalts. + is Kikiktat Mountain upper basalt (this study), \* is Kikiktat Mountain lower basalt (this study), ° is Paleozoic Angayucham basalt (Pallister and others, 1989). Dashed line distinguishing tholeiitic from calc-alkaline trends is from Irvine and Baragar (1971).*

on the age of the type Nuka Formation are also contradictory in the western Brooks Range, where arkosic beds originally considered to be Permian (Tailleur and Sable, 1963; Tailleur and others, 1973) are now considered to be Late Mississippian and Early Pennsylvanian(?) based on dating of conodonts and foraminifera (Mayfield and others, 1984). In summary, the preponderance of evidence favors a Late Mississippian to Early Pennsylvanian age for both the Nuka Formation and the overlying basalt at Kikiktat Mountain.

Detrital microcline grains from the Nuka Formation in its type area are dated as 1.2 to 1.8 Ga by K-Ar methods (Tailleur, 1985). Detrital zircons from the type area yielded evidence for 2.07 Ga rocks in the source area of the Nuka Formation, based on U-Pb dating methods (Hemming and others, 1989). The source of the granitic rock from which these grains were derived is not known.

## TECTONIC SETTING

The unique association of basalt overlying arkosic carbonates indicates an unusual tectonic setting for the deposits of Kikiktat Mountain. Coarse-grained quartz and unweathered alkali feldspar in turbidite deposits of

the Nuka Formation at Kikiktat Mountain are evidence of rapid erosion of a granitic source and minimal reworking before submarine deposition. Detrital fossils and carbonate indicate proximity to a carbonate platform. Pillow basalt interlayered with chert indicates predominantly submarine deposition, although the presence of columnar basalt implies of at least some subaerial flows, constraining deposition to a shallow, probably nearshore environment.

Major-oxide data for basalt from Kikiktat Mountain do not discriminate between continental margin and mid-oceanic settings. Pyroxene compositions (table 2) plotted on the discriminant diagram of Nisbet and Pearce (1977) fall in both the ocean-floor-basalt field and the field representing pyroxenes from all tectonic settings (fig. 7), providing an ambiguous tectonic interpretation based on pyroxene composition. However, the overall tholeiitic character of the basalts and the presence of both quartz-normative and olivine + hypersthene-normative basalts is more typical of tensional rather than compressional tectonic settings (Barker, 1983). The combination of these features is indicative of nearshore turbidite deposition at a passive or transform continental margin followed by deposition of basalt flows and chert in a rift environment.



Table 2. *Electron-microprobe analyses of clinopyroxene and plagioclase from Kikiktat Mountain upper basalt samples<sup>a</sup>*

Sample	85DNS108 cpx	85DNS108 cpx	85DNS108 cpx	85DNS151f cpx	85DNS151f cpx	85DNS108 plag
SiO <sub>2</sub>	51.23	53.22	52.15	51.67	52.12	50.71
TiO <sub>2</sub>	0.98	0.49	0.71	0.64	0.51	0.07
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	1.75	2.04	3.35	3.47	2.52	31.67
FeO*	18.03	7.61	8.00	7.72	7.25	0.74
MnO	0.48	0.20	0.24	0.22	0.21	0.00
MgO	14.72	18.90	17.23	16.54	16.67	0.23
CaO	13.75	18.00	19.13	19.34	20.04	14.82
Na <sub>2</sub> O	0.23	0.15	0.22	0.24	0.22	3.40
Total	101.17	100.61	101.03	99.84	99.54	101.64
<b>FORMULAE</b>						
Si	1.927	1.936	1.900	1.906	1.926	2.283
Al	0.073	0.064	0.100	0.094	0.074	1.680
SUM	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	3.963
Al	0.005	0.023	0.044	0.056	0.036	-
Ti	0.028	0.013	0.019	0.018	0.014	-
Fe	0.567	0.231	0.244	0.238	0.224	0.028
Mn	0.015	0.006	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.000
Mg	0.825	1.025	0.936	0.909	0.918	0.015
SUM	1.440	1.298	1.250	1.228	1.199	-
Ca	0.554	0.701	0.747	0.764	0.794	0.715
Na	0.017	0.011	0.016	0.017	0.001	0.297
SUM	0.571	0.712	0.763	0.781	0.795	1.055
O	6.000	6.000	6.000	6.000	6.000	8.000

<sup>a</sup>Analyses done using ARL-SEMQ, nine-channel microprobe at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

## DISCUSSION

Comparison of Kikiktat Mountain rocks with similar lithologies in the western and southern Brooks Range is the basis for correlations that may constrain the tectonic setting of Kikiktat Mountain. In the DeLong Mountains, the Nuka Ridge allochthon structurally overlies the Ipnarik River allochthon, which is characterized by dark-gray basinal limestone and black chert of Carboniferous age associated with numerous fine-grained mafic sills and dikes (Mayfield and others, 1988). Mafic sills and dikes have been interpreted as evidence of a late Pennsylvanian or younger rifting event (Mayfield and others, 1988). The lower basalt unit at Kikiktat Mountain occupies the structural position of the Ipnarik River allochthon, and we suggest that it could either be part of the Ipnarik River allochthon or structurally emplaced slivers of the Copter Peak allochthon. Alexander (1990) reported discontinuous exposures of chert, mafic intrusive, and Cretaceous rocks in the lowland at the base of Kikiktat Mountain, which he assigns to the Ipnarik River alloch-

thon. Structurally below the Ipnarik River allochthon at Kikiktat Mountain, rocks of the Picnic Creek allochthon are widespread (Mull and others, 1987). This stacking order of structural sequences is identical to that reported by Mayfield and others (1988) in the eastern De Long Mountains.

The distinctive Nuka Formation sandstone at Kikiktat Mountain is very similar to the Nuka Formation in the western Brooks Range, although the type Nuka Formation is not described as a turbidite. In addition, the shale in the lower part of the Nuka Formation at Kikiktat Mountain closely resembles the Kayak Shale in the type area of the Nuka Formation (Mayfield and others, 1988). Examination of thin sections of sandstone from Nuka Ridge reveals that clastic grains of the type Nuka Formation consist of quartz, alkali feldspar, calcite, and opaque minerals ± biotite ± hornblende ± zircon and ± fossils. Source rocks for much of the clastic material in both the type Nuka Formation and the Nuka Formation at Kikiktat Mountain are probably granites. However, the Kikiktat source was apparently a subsolvus granite

Figure 7. Plot of clinopyroxene in Kikiktat Mountain upper basalt in terms of  $TiO_2$ ,  $MnO$ , and  $Na_2O$ , showing fields of tectonic settings (Nisbet and Pearce, 1977). Field labels: 1 = ocean-floor basalt (OFB), 2 = volcanic-arc basalt (VAB), 3 = within-plate alkalic basalt (WPA), 4 = within-plate tholeiitic basalt (WPT)+WPA+VAB, 5 = VAB+WPA, 6 = OFB+VAB+WPA+WPT.

containing biotite  $\pm$  muscovite, whereas the type Nuka Formation was apparently derived from a hypersolvus granite (no calcic plagioclase) containing biotite  $\pm$  amphibole. Thus, despite close similarities that indicate similar tectonic settings and depositional environments for the Nuka Formation at Kikiktat Mountain and the type Nuka Formation, their sources are not identical.

The Copter igneous sequence at Copter Peak in the western Brooks Range includes pillow basalt and minor andesite with some intercalated shale and gray, green, and maroon cherts containing Triassic radiolarians (Mayfield and others, 1988). Pillow basalt and diabase at Siniktanneyak Mountain in the eastern De Long Mountains are tentatively correlated with the Copter igneous sequence (Mayfield and others, 1988) and are associated with fossils ranging in age from Devonian to Triassic (Nelson and others, 1979). Mafic rocks of the Angayucham terrane are also considered part of the Copter igneous sequence and are Late Devonian to Early Jurassic in age, based on associated radiolarians and conodonts (Barker and others, 1988; Pallister and others, 1989; Dillon, 1989). Thus, the Copter igneous sequence includes rocks ranging in age from Devonian to Jurassic and could represent a changing tectonic setting through time.

Two whole-rock major-oxide analyses of Angayucham basalt of Paleozoic age from the central Brooks

Range are published (Pallister and others, 1989); one is similar to the basalt of Kikiktat Mountain (figs. 5 and 6). Pallister and others (1989) concluded that basalt of Mesozoic age in the Angayucham Mountains is an accreted oceanic plateau. However, they did not specifically address the tectonic origin of the Paleozoic basalt. Therefore, a correlation of the Kikiktat Mountain klippe with the Paleozoic basalt of the Angayucham Mountains does not conclusively resolve the tectonic setting of the klippe.

Moore (1987) stated that the Kikiktat Mountain basalt displays flat rare-earth-element patterns and is most similar to dikes of the Ipnavik sequence, but it is generally also geochemically similar to basalt of Copter Peak and Siniktanneyak Mountain. He concluded that basalt from Copter Peak allochthon at Siniktanneyak Mountain and Copter Peak geochemically correlates with Angayucham-terrane basalt of inferred oceanic-plateau origin but that Kikiktat Mountain basalt and Ipnavik-sequence dikes and sills could indicate a rift origin.

## CONCLUSIONS

Field and petrographic evidence at Kikiktat Mountain clearly reveal the undisturbed contact of the upper basalt at Kikiktat Mountain over the arkosic sandstone and shale of the Nuka Formation (fig. 3). We conclude that the upper basalt at Kikiktat Mountain correlates best with the Copter Peak allochthon, based on lithology, age, and structural position. The Kikiktat Mountain basalt was probably extruded in an extensional tectonic environment during late Paleozoic time and may be the extrusive equivalent of mafic dikes and sills of the Ipnavik sequence. The basalt flows were extruded over marine sediments of the Nuka Formation, which were probably deposited near a carbonate platform at a passive or transform margin and which had a Pre-cambrian continental source of detritus. Thus, the Copter Peak and Nuka Ridge allochthons at Kikiktat Mountain represent a single structural package of late Paleozoic rocks. However, because of the wide range in ages of basalts that have been correlated with the Copter Peak igneous sequence, it is likely that the Copter Peak allochthon elsewhere includes basalt of different tectonic settings and is a distinct structural entity.

Similar relations exist in the southern De Long Mountains where Nuka Formation is overlain by basalt in a number of areas. Although this contact is a fault contact at the few places where it is actually exposed, in view of the pervasiveness of thrusting in the De Long Mountains, we suggest that the fault is a thrust or detachment along an original depositional contact between basalt and Nuka Formation. This relation contrasts with the type Nuka Formation at Nuka Ridge in the northern

De Long Mountains, where Nuka Formation is overlain by Pennsylvanian to Triassic siliceous shale and chert of the Etivluk Group and by Cretaceous graywacke. These contrasting relations indicate that after deposition of the Nuka Formation, normal marine sedimentary processes occurred contemporaneously with extrusion of basalt in other areas. Such rapid lateral facies changes are compatible with the interpretation of basalt extruded in a rift setting.

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# SAMPLE MEDIA USEFUL FOR A SYSTEMATIC GEOCHEMICAL SURVEY OF UPPER VALDEZ CREEK, ALASKA

By

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## INTRODUCTION

The Valdez Creek drainage in the Healy A-1 Quadrangle, Alaska (fig.1), contains some of the richest placer gravels in North America. The abundance of gold in Valdez Creek gravels indicates that the bedrock source is large. This source has not been conclusively demonstrated, but favored prospect areas include Gold Hill and Lucky Hill in the upper Valdez Creek drainage. These hills are mantled by extensive soliflucted colluvium that locally contains fine-grained (<0.1-mm) gold.

A program of collecting bedrock, vein, and soil samples on a systematic grid and then analyzing for gold and correlated pathfinder elements is one technique that may be effective in identifying bedrock prospects. To enhance the effectiveness of such a geochemical survey, it is helpful to know the trace-element characteristics of the potential sample media. Therefore, our motivation for the present study was to generate information that will be useful in designing a systematic geochemical survey of Gold Hill and Lucky Hill.

Ross (1933) and Tuck (1938), in their early studies of the Valdez Creek district (fig.1), concluded that there is no correlation between gold and the abundance of trace sulfide minerals (pyrite, arsenopyrite, pyrrhotite, and chalcopyrite) in bedrock and vein material. Their work implied that there should be little correlation between gold and arsenic, copper, or iron. However, later work disclosed significant elemental correlations between gold and silver, arsenic, copper, and zinc in the Timberline Creek drainage a few kilometers west of Gold Hill (Herzberg, 1980). Smith (1981) found significant correlation between gold, silver, and mercury in samples collected from the broader region of the Healy A-1 Quadrangle.

We collected 20 bedrock and 21 vein samples from Gold Hill and Lucky Hill (Wiltse, 1988) for analysis by fire assay-atomic absorption spectrometry (FA-AAS) and by the inductively-coupled plasma-atomic-emission spectrometry (ICP-AES) technique to determine whether significant gold:metal correlations could be found in analytical data derived from bedrock and vein samples.

We also collected samples from B horizons of alpine soils across the trace of the Yellowhorn gold vein located on the north flank of Gold Hill (fig.1). Because colluvium mantles most hillsides in the area, soil samples are a necessary part of any systematic geochemical exploration survey there.

Soils on the hill sides are immature and it is difficult to consistently identify soil-horizon boundaries. Because of cryoturbation, parent colluvium is relatively homogeneous in each solifluction lobe. However, solifluction lobes from higher elevations overrun those lower on the hillside so that there are primary textural variations in a typical vertical soil profile.

## METHODS

The bedrock sample suite included 20 rock samples that represent the metamorphosed sedimentary rocks and tuffs in the study area and 21 samples of vein material collected from outcrop and slope rubble. Eight 0.5- to 1-kg B-horizon soil samples and eight 4- to 5-kg B-horizon soil samples [for heavy-mineral concentration (HMC)] were collected from a line of eight test pits in the vicinity of the Yellowhorn gold vein (fig.1). All sample material was analyzed for trace gold by FA-AAS and for the following elements by ICP-AES after an aqua-regia digestion: Al, Ag, As, Ba, Be, Bi, Ca, Cd, Co, Cr, Cu, Fe, Ga, Hg, K, La, Mg, Mn, Mo, Na, Ni, P, Pb, Sb, Sc, Sr, Te, Ti, Tl, U, V, W, and Zn. Aqua-regia digestion of rocks and soils usually results in incomplete liberation of Al, Ba, Ca, Cr, Ga, K, La, Mg, Na, Sr, Ti, Tl, and W. However, these elements are included in the following statistical analysis because the sample media are similar and the analytical treatment of the samples is uniform. Partial analyses, therefore, are meaningful within the constraints of this study. Trace-element concentrations of Be, Cd, Ga, Hg, La, Pb, Sb, Tl, and U were below detection limits in most samples collected or have virtually no geochemical dispersion (Wiltse, in prep.) and so are not considered further in this paper.

Prior to analysis, rock samples were washed to remove contaminating soil and then pulverized to -150

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Figure 1. *Sketch map of eight soil-sampling pits near Yellowhorn prospect on Gold Hill with inset showing locations of Gold Hill and Lucky Hill in Valdez Creek mining district.*

mesh in an agate swing mill. Soil samples were sieved to produce four size fractions: 2 to 0.5 mm, 0.5 to 0.18 mm, 0.18 to 0.063 mm, and <0.063 mm. Each size fraction was weighed and then pulverized to -150 mesh prior to analysis.

Heavy-mineral soil samples were prepared for analysis by first decanting the <0.063-mm size fraction and then sieving to extract the 0.5- to 0.063-mm soil material. Washing the <0.063-mm size fraction from the sample is effective because of the relatively slow settling rate of <0.063-mm-diameter gold particles (Walsh, 1986). To avoid loss of fine-grained gold slightly larger than 0.063 mm, the decant was poured through a 0.063-mm (230-mesh) screen, and retained material was returned to the >0.063-mm fraction. This process was repeated with clear wash water until the decanted liquid was only slightly cloudy. A size cutoff of 0.063 mm was used for the HMC because finer-grained material is difficult to separate with heavy liquids. The 0.5- to 0.063-mm size fraction was split in a rifflesplitter to obtain about 300 g of material for subsequent heavy-liquid mineral separation using acetylene tetrabromide (specific gravity = 2.96). The HMC was then pulverized to -150 mesh in an agate swing mill prior to analysis.

Possible correlations between gold and other elements were tested using the Spearman rank-correlation coefficient,  $r'$ . This correlation coefficient was chosen instead of the more commonly used Pearsonian product-moment correlation coefficient,  $r$ , because the sample population is small and some of the data do not have a statistically normal distribution (Rock, 1988).

## RESULTS

Table 1 lists Spearman rank-correlation coefficients of gold with 20 elements in the 20 bedrock and 21 vein samples collected in the Gold Hill and Lucky Hill area. No correlation was calculated for Ag, Be, Bi, Cd, Ga, Hg, La, Mo, Pb, Sb, Te, Tl, or U because their concentrations exceeded detection levels in fewer than five samples. If an element correlates in a significantly positive or negative sense with gold at the 95 percent confidence level, the calculated  $r'$  for the Au:element pair must exceed the critical value,  $r'^*$ , of the Spearman rank-correlation coefficient. The value of  $r'^*$  is a function of the number of element pairs ( $n$ ) used to calculate  $r'$  (Davis, 1986). It is apparent from table 1 that none of the elements listed for rock or vein samples significantly correlates with gold at the 95-percent confidence level. This finding is compatible with the findings of Ross (1933) and Tuck (1938) in the area.

Table 2 lists Spearman rank-correlation coefficients and critical values for gold and 24 elements for each of four size fractions separated from B-horizon soil

samples. Review of the  $r'$  and  $r'^*$  values demonstrates that there are several elements in each size fraction of soil that significantly correlate with gold. The 0.18- to 0.063-mm soil fraction has the most pairs of elements showing a significant Au:metal correlation. Figure 2 shows variations in chemical concentrations of gold and significantly correlated elements in the 0.18- to 0.063-mm soil fraction plotted diagrammatically relative to the pits from which the samples were collected. Pit 3 is located slightly downslope from the projected strike of the Yellowhorn vein (fig. 1). There, the ground surface slopes downward to the north, and the graphs in figure 2 are oriented with north to the left. The maximum peak-to-background ratio for gold concentrations shown in figure 2 is about 25:1.

Figure 3 is a series of box plots for gold concentrations in each of the four soil fractions analyzed. The median value of gold in a soil fraction is represented by the middle bar of the box. The ends of each box include most data values obtained from the eight samples of the given size fraction. Lines extending from the ends of the boxes indicate the extreme range of gold values for a small percentage of samples, and points plotted beyond the ends of the lines are single anomalous values. Velleman and Hoaglin (1981) presented a detailed discussion of the underlying concepts and computations pertinent to box plots. In our study, box plots indicate that all soil fractions contained detectable gold, but the finest size fraction had the highest median concentration of gold. This result is compatible with observations of very fine-grained gold particles visible in soil samples panned in the field.

Table 3 lists Spearman rank-correlation coefficients for gold and 27 elements analyzed in eight HMCs of B-horizon soil samples. It is clear that, in the HMC samples, 16 elements significantly correlate with gold. Figure 4 compares the median and range of gold values in HMC samples and the samples of the four unconcentrated size fractions from soils. In general, analytical values of gold in the HMC of the soil are at least 10 times greater than in any unconcentrated soil fractions.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### Rock and Vein Samples

Our correlation analysis of the analytical data from rock and vein samples indicates that, for samples subjected to aqua-regia digestion, there is no correlation between gold and other trace elements in Valdez Creek rock and vein material. This lack of significant correlation implies that, among the elements tested in this study using our treatment methods, there are no reliable bedrock pathfinders for gold. In the area investigated, we do not expect

Table 1. Spearman rank-correlation coefficients ( $r'$ ) and critical values ( $r'^*$ ) indicating correlation between gold and 20 elements analyzed in Gold Hill and Lucky Hill rock and vein samples.  $n$  = number of paired analyses. Bold, underlined  $r'$  values significant at 95-percent confidence level.  $r'^*$  from Davis (1986). Analytical data upon which these correlations are based are listed in Wiltse (1988)

Rock				Vein			
Element	$r'$	$r'^*$	n	Element	$r'$	$r'^*$	n
Al	-.264	.555	13	Al	-.211	.580	12
As	.111	.636	10	As	.368	.580	12
Ba	-.422	.555	13	Ba	-.262	.745	7
Ca	.053	.555	13	Ca	.316	.580	12
Co	.190	.555	13	Co	.055	.580	12
Cr	.147	.555	13	Cr	-.270	.580	12
Cu	.197	.555	13	Cu	-.098	.580	12
Fe	.316	.555	13	Fe	.260	.580	12
K	-.444	.555	13	K	-.110	.636	10
Mg	-.111	.555	13	Mg	.025	.609	11
Mn	.006	.555	13	Mn	.386	.580	12
Na	-.364	.555	13	Na	-.067	.636	10
Ni	.171	.609	11	Ni	-.215	.636	10
P	-.419	.555	13	P	-.002	.580	12
Sc	-.153	.580	12	Sc	-.282	.714	8
Sr	-.042	.555	13	Sr	.276	.580	12
Ti	.635	.683	9	Ti	.263	.900	5
V	-.081	.555	13	V	-.594	.609	11
W	.202	.609	11	W	.	.	.
Zn	-.142	.555	13	Zn	.414	.414	12

to find any of the trace elements analyzed in this study distributed as halos in the rocks surrounding gold sources. Therefore, if an extensive program of lithogeochemical sampling based on analysis for gold by FA-AAS and for trace elements by aqua-regia digestion is conducted in the Lucky Hill-Gold Hill area to locate a bedrock gold source, there is little to be gained by analyzing rock and vein samples for any element but gold. However, other analytical treatments of rock and vein material may produce systematic correlations between gold and some of the elements that were incompletely liberated by our treatments.

### Soil Samples

We emphasize that the population of soil samples investigated in this preliminary orientation study is small, and sampling was confined to pits near the Yellowhorn vein. Therefore, caution is required in generalizing the trace-element distributions implied by these data. Regardless, correlation analysis of these preliminary data indicates that, for unconcentrated soil material (table 2), the 0.18- to 0.063-mm soil size fraction contains the greatest number of pathfinder elements that correlate with gold. However, this size fraction does not yield the

best median response to the presence of gold in unconcentrated soil (fig. 3). Based on field observations and box plots (fig. 3), it is apparent that considerable gold is contained in the <0.063-mm soil fraction. However, the <0.063-mm soil fraction has few elements correlated with gold; for the <0.063-mm soil fraction, only silver, molybdenum, and tellurium augment gold data in locating gold-enriched zones. Because pathfinder elements are often more widely dispersed than anomalous gold values, they offer better exploration targets. Thus, the lack of other correlated elements in the <0.063-mm soil material is a serious limitation indicating that the finest soil fraction should not be selected as the sample medium for a systematic geochemical soil survey.

As a practical matter, it is time consuming to quantitatively separate <0.063-mm material from soil samples or isolate the 0.18- to 0.063-mm soil fraction. It is desirable to collect a more easily processed soil sample that contains several correlated pathfinder elements and has a high gold-response value. Because sample aliquots of equal size were used to derive our analytical data, a weighted average (based on the weight of each size fraction in the original sample) of elemental concentrations for the two most promising size fractions (0.18 to 0.063 mm and <0.063 mm) should approximate values expected



Table 2. Spearman rank-correlation coefficients ( $r'$ ) and critical values ( $r'^*$ ) indicating the correlation between gold and 24 elements analyzed in four size fractions of B-horizon soils.  $n$  = number of paired analyses. Bold, underlined  $r'$  values significant at 95-percent confidence level.  $r'^*$  from Davis (1986). Analytical data upon which these correlations are based are listed in Wiltse (in prep.)

Element	2 mm-0.5 mm			0.5 mm-0.18 mm			0.18 mm-0.063 mm			<0.063 mm		
	$r'$	$r'^*$	$n$	$r'$	$r'^*$	$n$	$r'$	$r'^*$	$n$	$r'$	$r'^*$	$n$
Al	-.229	.714	8	.643	.714	8	-.373	.714	8	-.548	.714	8
Ag	.	.	0	.778	.829	6	<u>.777</u>	.745	7	<u>.926</u>	.829	6
As	.262	.714	8	<u>.847</u>	.714	8	<u>.824</u>	.714	8	.700	.714	8
Ba	<u>-.747</u>	.714	8	-.012	.714	8	<u>-.765</u>	.714	8	-.548	.714	8
Bi	.416	.745	7	.	.	4	<u>.798</u>	.745	7	.	.	4
Ca	-.615	.714	8	.095	.714	8	-.307	.714	8	-.452	.714	8
Co	.598	.714	8	.491	.714	8	.479	.714	8	.108	.714	8
Cr	-.590	.714	8	.095	.714	8	.442	.714	8	-.452	.714	8
Cu	.376	.714	8	.690	.714	8	<u>.886</u>	.714	8	.643	.714	8
Fe	.289	.714	8	.683	.714	8	<u>.771</u>	.714	8	.024	.714	8
K	-.539	.714	8	.683	.714	8	-.275	.714	8	-.405	.714	8
Mg	.145	.714	8	.690	.714	8	.252	.714	8	-.143	.714	8
Mn	-.566	.714	8	-.143	.714	8	-.395	.714	8	.333	.714	8
Mo	<u>.853</u>	.829	6	-.293	.829	6	.638	.745	7	<u>.732</u>	.714	8
Na	-.486	.745	7	-.075	.745	7	-.264	.745	7	.	.	3
Ni	.506	.714	8	.643	.714	8	<u>.743</u>	.714	8	.357	.714	8
P	.157	.714	8	.000	.714	8	-.575	.714	8	.571	.714	8
Pb	.577	.829	6	.	.	3	.704	.745	7	.	.	4
Sc	<u>-.750</u>	.714	8	.409	.714	8	-.110	.714	8	-.466	.714	8
Sr	<u>-.723</u>	.714	8	-.452	.714	8	-.671	.714	8	-.575	.714	8
Te	.179	.714	8	<u>.837</u>	.714	8	<u>.815</u>	.714	8	<u>.868</u>	.714	8
Ti	<u>-.733</u>	.714	8	.095	.714	8	-.410	.714	8	-.539	.714	8
V	<u>-.771</u>	.714	8	-.263	.714	8	-.335	.714	8	-.539	.714	8
Zn	.422	.714	8	.563	.745	7	.645	.714	8	.286	.714	8



Table 3. *Spearman rank-correlation coefficients ( $r'$ ) and critical values ( $r'^*$ ) indicating the correlation between gold and 27 elements analyzed in heavy-mineral concentrates of B-horizon soil.  $n$  = number of paired analyses. Bold, underlined  $r'$  values significant at 95-percent confidence level.  $r'^*$  from Davis (1986). Analytical data upon which these correlations are based are listed in Wiltse (in prep.)*

Element	$r'$	$r'^*$	$n$
Al	-.381	.714	8
Ag	<b><u>.994</u></b>	.714	8
As	<b><u>.762</u></b>	.714	8
Ba	.012	.714	8
Be	<b><u>.771</u></b>	.714	8
Ca	-.357	.714	8
Co	<b><u>.833</u></b>	.714	8
Cr	-.667	.714	8
Cu	<b><u>.833</u></b>	.714	8
Fe	<b><u>.833</u></b>	.714	8
K	.347	.714	8
La	-.577	.714	8
Mg	<b><u>.810</u></b>	.714	8
Mn	<b><u>.857</u></b>	.714	8
Mo	<b><u>.854</u></b>	.714	8
Na	<b><u>-.964</u></b>	.714	8
Ni	<b><u>.833</u></b>	.714	8
P	.690	.714	8
Pb	<b><u>.755</u></b>	.714	8
Sb	.504	.714	8
Sc	-.275	.714	8
Sr	<b><u>-.838</u></b>	.714	8
Te	<b><u>.826</u></b>	.714	8
Ti	<b><u>-.790</u></b>	.714	8
V	-.371	.714	8
W	-.088	.829	6
Zn	<b><u>.929</u></b>	.714	8

Analytical data displayed in figures 4 and 7 indicate that a systematic soil survey of Lucky Hill and Gold Hill that utilizes heavy-mineral concentrates extracted from soil will most reliably identify gold-enriched soils and probably will identify distinct trace-element halos centered on gold-enriched soils. These soil anomalies should be traceable to nearby bedrock sources of mineralization.

## CONCLUSIONS

Fire assay-atomic absorption spectrometry provides a sensitive and effective analytical technique for determining gold in bedrock and vein material in the Lucky Hill and Gold Hill area of the Valdez Creek mining district.

Figure 4. *Box plots of gold concentrations in four size fractions of soil and in heavy-mineral concentrates of samples collected near Yellowhorn prospect: A = 2 to 0.5 mm, B = 0.5 to 0.18 mm, C = 0.18 to 0.063 mm, D = <0.063 mm, and H = heavy mineral concentrates. o = individual sample values.*

However, aqua-regia digests of pulverized bedrock and vein material did not yield associated trace-element data that significantly correlated with gold values. Either there is no correlation between gold and other elements in Gold Hill-Lucky Hill bedrock and vein material or digestion of bedrock and vein material by aqua regia is not an effective analytical procedure for extracting these correlations.

The most easily derived unconcentrated soil fraction acceptable for use in a systematic geochemical soil survey is the <0.18-mm (-80-mesh) size fraction, which exhibits significant correlation between gold and four pathfinder trace elements (Cu, Bi, As, and Ag) and provides anomalous gold concentrations that are sufficiently above analytical detection limits for reliable analysis.

Heavy-mineral concentrates of the 0.5- to 0.063-mm soil size fraction provided the most responsive sample media tested in this study. Gold concentrations in HMC soil material enhance by about 10 times the gold values in unconcentrated soil material, and the peak-to-background ratio of gold in heavy-mineral concentrates derived from soils is about 100:1 as opposed to about 25:1 in unconcentrated soil fractions.

Table 4. Spearman rank-correlation coefficients ( $r'$ ) and critical values ( $r'^*$ ) indicating the correlation between weighted average values of gold and 24 elements analyzed in <0.18-mm size fractions of B-horizon soils.  $n$  = number of paired analyses. Bold, underlined  $r'$  values significant at 95-percent confidence level.  $r'^*$  from Davis (1986). Analytical data upon which these correlations are based are listed in Wiltse (in prep.)

Element	$r'$	$r'^*$	$n$
Al	-.214	.714	8
Ag	<b><u>.933</u></b>	.745	7
As	<b><u>.810</u></b>	.714	8
Ba	-.548	.714	8
Bi	<b><u>.775</u></b>	.745	7
Ca	-.262	.714	8
Co	.071	.714	8
Cr	-.143	.714	8
Cu	<b><u>.738</u></b>	.714	8
Fe	.024	.714	8
K	-.238	.714	8
Mg	-.095	.714	8
Mn	.333	.714	8
Mo	.655	.714	8
Na	-.317	.714	8
Ni	.571	.714	8
P	.548	.745	7
Pb	.393	.714	8
Sc	-.452	.714	8
Sr	-.524	.714	8
Te	.275	.714	8
Ti	-.333	.714	8
V	-.524	.714	8
Zn	.357	.714	8

Pathfinder elements that significantly correlate with gold are abundant in the HMC soil fraction of Gold Hill soils and include Ag, As, Be, Co, Cu, Fe, Mg, Mn, Mo, Na, Ni, Pb, Sr, Te, Ti, and Zn. Therefore, analysis of systematically collected soil HMC samples should identify trace-element halos centered on anomalous soil-gold concentrations.

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Figure 7. *Variations in concentrations of elements significantly correlated with gold (Au) in heavy-mineral concentrates of soils collected near Yellowhorn prospect, Gold Hill. Vertical line represents Yellowhorn vein. \* Au in parts per billion. Pits located in figure 1.*

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Geology and K-Ar age of mineralized intrusive rocks from the Chulitna mining district, central Alaska  
The Richardson lineament: A structural control for gold deposits in the Richardson mining district, interior Alaska  
Boulder Creek tin lode deposits  
Comparison of mercury-antimony-tungsten mineralization of Alaska with strata-bound cinnabar-stibnite-scheelite deposits of the Circum-Pacific and Mediterranean regions  
Earthquake recurrence and location in the western Gulf of Alaska

### Short Notes on Alaskan Geology-1978: DGGs Geologic Report 61 (\$2.00)

Holocene displacements measured by trenching the Castle Mountain fault near Houston  
Bluff Point landslide, a massive ancient rock failure near Homer  
Recurrent late Quaternary faulting near Healy  
Glaciation of Indian Mountain, west-central Alaska  
The Cantwell ash bed, a Holocene tephra in the central Alaska Range  
Geochronology of metamorphic and igneous rocks in the Kantishna Hills, Mount McKinley Quadrangle  
The Chilikadrotna Greenstone, an Upper Silurian metavolcanic sequence in the central Lake Clark Quadrangle  
Tectonic and economic significance of Late Devonian and late Proterozoic U-Pb zircon ages from the Brooks Range

### Short Notes on Alaskan Geology-1979-80: DGGs Geologic Report 63 (\$1.00)

Lead isotope ratios from the Red Dog and Drenchwater Creek lead-zinc deposits, De Long Mountains, Brooks Range  
40K-40Ar ages from rhyolite of Sugar Loaf Mountain, central Alaska Range: Implications for offset along the Hines Creek strand of the Denali fault system  
Multiple glaciation in the Beaver Mountains, western interior Alaska  
Fossil algae in Lower Devonian limestones, east-central Alaska  
Tertiary tillites(?) on the northeast flank of Granite Mountain, central Alaska Range  
Evidence for suprapermafrost ground-water blockage, Prudhoe Bay oil field

### Short Notes on Alaskan Geology-1982-83: DGGs Professional Report 86 (\$6.00)

An unconformity with associated conglomeratic sediments in the Berners Bay area of southeast Alaska  
An iron-rich lava flow from the Nenana coal field, central Alaska  
Results of shallow seismic survey for ground water at McGrath  
Evaluation of a shallow sand-and-gravel aquifer at Eagle River  
Correlation of geophysical well logs for a water development in south Anchorage  
Garnet compositional estimates as indicators of progressive regional metamorphism in polymetamorphic rocks, Kantishna Hills  
Geology of the Miss Molly molybdenum prospect, Tyonek C-6 Quadrangle  
Glacial geology of the Mt. Prindle area, Yukon-Tanana Upland

